THE SAINT IN THE SADDLE

A TALE OF THE MORMON REBELLION

by DEE LINFORD

A POPULAR PUBLICATION

JUNE

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ENGINE ROOM
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WHILE THE TRANS-ATLANTIC LINER S.S. "LA SALLE" PLOWS THROUGH THE WINTER NIGHT TOWARD NEW YORK, FIREMAN JOE BLIGH OVERHEARS AN INTERESTING CONVERSATION...
...AND MY DAUGHTER'S JEWELS ARE MISSING!
IF I'D ONLY GIVEN THEM TO THE PURSER!
H-M-M-M, BLIGH WAS RIGHT
LATER
W-W-WHAT TH'...
DROP 'EM, "FUNNY"! PUT UP YOUR HANDS!
"FUNNY MONEY" COOK IS ONE OF OUR BEST-KNOWN COUNTERFEITERS. THIS JEWEL THEFT WAS JUST A DIVERSION
AND MR. BLIGH HERE IS A FEDERAL OPERATIVE
I'VE ASKED MR. BISHOP AND HIS DAUGHTER TO JOIN US AT MY TABLE
MISS BISHOP'S A KNOCKOUT. YES, AND THAT REMINDS ME, I NEED A SHAVE
RAZOR PULLS, EH? TRY THIS THIN GILLETTE BLADE
SOME DIFFERENCE! THIS THIN GILLETTE SKIMS 'EM OFF LIKE MAGIC!
YES, THEY'RE PLENTY KEEN AND LONG-LASTING
OUR WINTER HOME IS IN WASHINGTON. I HOPE YOU'LL CALL ON US SOON
I'M HONORED, SIR. I CERTAINLY SHALL
HE'S MY IDEA OF A HANDSOME MAN
YOU ENJOY SMOOTH, REFRESHING, GOOD-LOOKING SHAVES WITH THIN GILLETTES. THEY ARE FAR AND AWAY THE KEENEST AND LONGEST-LASTING BLADES IN THE LOW-PRICE FIELD. ANOTHER THING, THIN GILLETTES FIT YOUR RAZOR EXACTLY...PROTECT YOU FROM THE NICKS AND IRRITATION CAUSED BY MISFIT BLADES. ALWAYS ASK FOR THIN GILLETTES
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Vol. 119, No. 2 for June, 1948 Best of New Stories

NOVELETTES

Jackal Song..... JAMES ATLEE PHILLIPS 42

Through three long years of war we'd sent our planes across the Hump to China, with Death a daily passenger and the whole fleet having to be replaced every ten months. Now—1948—on the Assam run, we'd got the average down to two dead pilots a week! Not good going for "peace-time" operations but what with Calcutta smuggling syndicates, personal vendettas in Kunming and a vanilla lunatic out to destroy the entire China Airline for no apparent reason, those war years began to take on a nostalgic quality of calm. Back then, unlike today, we never conned the plot-board to learn definitely just which of us pilots was slated for the next fatal crash!

Ooyoo and the Chuckchis..... R. D. HAMILTON 68

Scientists being hidebound as they are, I hardly dared mention in my monograph—*The Migration Route of the Pacific Walrus*—that a herd of bulls had violated an age-old habit and detoured Siberia to take the Alaskan waterway for their annual breeding trek. But then the pundits hadn't observed Ooyoo, that giant amphibious tusker, and watched the frantic evolutions he performed with my friend, Jack Grant, year after year. It was enough to confound the giddiest cow in Ooyoo's harem—or the most conservative zoologist who ever spawned a "definitive" thesis.

SHORT STORIES

Day of Reckoning..... WILLIAM ARTHUR BREYFOGLE 62

We'll call it Pernaquil. That's not its name but you ought to recognize it as the tiny banana republic where we sent some Marines to "restore order" back in the '20's. Burke had served there with the leathernecks and after his hitch was up he went back. Not because he liked the place—he hated everything about it—but there was still a job to do. Wasn't Dictator Caron—after twenty-five years—still as solidly entrenched as ever—or was he?

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BE OUT ON JUNE 9TH ◆ ◆ ◆

Obadiah Interprets the Word... WILLIAM WARNER GRAHAM **114**

Some might say it was a mite off the law to set brush fires to scrub—but not Obadiah. By gooberdam, the Lord had to help a man to help Him, and if His mysterious ways seemed like arson to some, just read the Word: *Job, 15-34.*

A Motto for the Skipper..... STEVE HAIL **124**

Mr. Elkins, the new assistant third engineer, was green as seaweed—fresh off the schoolship where the motto was *Semper Docte*—"Always Learn." And what better place to follow the maxim than aboard that ancient tramp freighter *Ceranto*—loaded way over her Plimsolls and teetering on the edge of catastrophe with a temperamental skipper who was a liberal education himself.

SERIALS

The Saint in the Saddle (1st of 2 parts)..... DEE LINFORD **10**

There was treachery somewhere within the Army itself! The red line on the wall map at headquarters stopped short at the Spanish River, pin-pointing the ignominious performance of U. S. troops in the affair which was coming to be called the "Mormon War." Brigham Young had issued his proclamation—"If they cross the Spanish I will consider it a hostile act!"—and it began to look as though someone in command of the U. S. forces was taking the warning seriously. No wonder Colonel Johnston needed information on why the campaign had bogged down. Which was why Tyler Teacum suddenly found himself a spy in the ranks of the enemy.

Ghost-Mine Gold (conclusion)..... STEVE FRAZEE **84**

Groping through the murky gloom of an abandoned mine tunnel deep under Sylvan Mountain, Rigdon Sadar stumbles on the solution to the riddle of the vanished gold his grandfather had been suspected of stealing forty-five years before—and finally brings to an end the violence and bitterness and bloodshed spawned by the lost treasure.

THE FACT STORY

Eagle's Dust..... GEORGES SURDEZ **121**

December 1940—Hitler's hordes had occupied Paris and all France was crushed under Nazism's iron heel. But Der Fuehrer wanted desperately to win the support of the people as well as of the Vichy government. What grand gesture would appeal to them? Who was their greatest idol—symbol of victory on a global scale? Napoleon, *naturlich!* So what more fitting gift could he make to France than the bones of the emperor's son. L'Aiglon would come home at last to lie in state beside his illustrious father under the Dome at Les Invalides!

DEPARTMENTS

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The Trail Ahead..... News of next month's issue **132**

Cover painted for Adventure *by Peter Stevens*
Kenneth S. White, Editor

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

ONLY one recruit to the ranks of our Writers' Brigade this month. Dee Linford, whose tale of the Mormon migration West gets under way on page 10, backgrounds himself and his novel with the following interesting notation—

Over and above the ordinary promptings to write (avarice, presumption, etc.), I believe I can truthfully say that my urge to write "The Saint in the Saddle" goes back twenty years, to the days when I sat at my grandmother's knee, listening to the exploits of her father, my own great-grandfather, who—by her account—was quite a man.

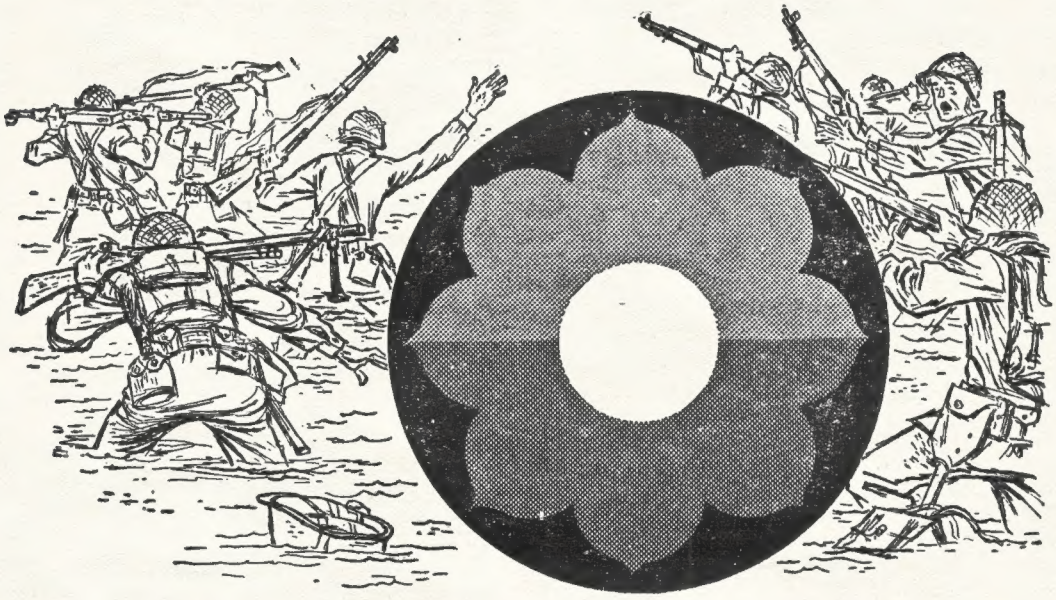
His name was Savage, and in the spirit of the time he sometimes lived up to the letter of his name. Big, raw-boned, aquiline, he was an early convert to the Mormon Church, went through the fighting in Missouri and Illinois— "giving back as good or as bad as was sent." He came west to Salt Lake with Brigham Young's vanguard in 1847, and almost immediately organized a freighting system between Salt Lake and Sutter's Fort in California, by way of the northern, Fort Hall route.

When Porter Rockwell brought word to Salt Lake early in 1856 that Buchanan had sent an army of annihilation under the "Squaw Killer" (this title was at first applied to General Harney, an old Indian fighter, originally in command of the expedition, and was later transposed without much justification to Johnston), why, the Utah militia, an evolution of the old Nauvoo Legion, was ordered into the field, under its capable captains, Bob Burton and colorful, hard-riding, hard-swearing Lot Smith. My great-grandfather was a close friend of Smith's, and was at his right hand during the harsh if largely bloodless campaign of attrition, which finally stopped the army dead in its tracks, at Bridger's Post, at the edge of the Rocky Mountains.

Many of the tales I heard were apocryphal; others are borne out by written records. All of them were good. One, which I had no occasion to use in this story, told how a few hundred "Saints" would "surround" the army at night, light maybe a hundred campfires, and ride endlessly from one fire to another, giving the impression that the plains were literally alive with men. Reports went back to the War Department that the Mormons had placed a hundred thousand men in the field, whereas two thousand was the actual maximum of General Wells' irregular forces. Because of the indecision and blundering in the management of the army's campaign, there seems little reason to doubt now the Mormon contention that the Zion Defenders could have destroyed the forces of the "invading enemy" utterly and at will; that only the foresight and stern "no shooting" orders of Brigham Young avoided that catastrophe, and the general and unprecedented conflagration which would certainly have resulted. It is my own opinion that never in the history of

(Continued on page 8)

Only real men can wear it



No shoulder insignia in the U. S. Army is more proudly worn than the red-white-and-blue Octofoil of the Ninth Infantry Division. Along with it goes the Belgian Fourragere. You can wear both—if you're man enough to measure up to the standards of a great fighting tradition.

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U. S. ARMY AND U. S. AIR FORCE RECRUITING SERVICE

CAREERS WITH A FUTURE

U. S. Army and U. S. Air Force

(Continued from page 6)

our armed forces, until the days of Bataan, was a body of our troops pushed into so hazardous and hopeless a situation, so ill-equipped and outfitted—without orders, without a commander, without any purpose whatsoever in being.

Several times in the past I tried to write this story, from the Mormon viewpoint. Always, I bogged down in the morass of details necessary to get over the idea of "what it was all about." Also, the Mormon viewpoint, while altogether sympathetic, has rather lost significance and is hard to grasp today. The army viewpoint—it never changes.

A few years ago, I came across the only (to my knowledge) published available record of the campaign left by the army: The letters of Capt. Jesse A. Gove, collected by the New Hampshire Historical Society, and published in 1928 by the Arthur H. Clark Company, under the title, "The Utah Expedition." This record had the advantage of being "unofficial"—made up almost entirely of young Gove's letters to his worried wife, with valuable appendices of dispatches sent back to the big newspapers of the East, by official and unofficial correspondents in the field.

This treasure trove not only chronicled the progress and hardships of the campaign. It offers remarkable insight into the hopeless confusion in which the troops marched—and into the resulting resentments, bitterness, bickering, internal politics and maneuvering of its various principals, the confused outlook toward the Mormon people, etc.

Examples: The selfrighteous Gove cutting the bank viciously from under his temporary commander, Col. Alexander, while kowtowing to his face. Gove snarling at the ragamuffin Mormon dogs, in one letter, boasting how his company alone if turned loose would level Salt Lake in a week; crying piteously in the next, because of the impossible odds, superiority of the Mormon horses and rifles, etc. The War Department seeking to control the bitterly unfavorable publicity by making it a general court-martial offense for soldiers in the expedition to write letters to the papers back east. Johnston coming in for a vast amount of criticism in the big metropolitan dailies. Our Capt. Gove coming stoutly to the defense of his new commander, writing long tirades to the Times and Tribune, under another name, and in defiance of War Department orders. Unable at last to keep his secret. Confiding in his commander that he was "Mr. X," and receiving the approbation of his scrupulously correct commandant. Moral? Just that men are men, and army is army, then and now.

Most interesting and perhaps most significant sidelight of the Gove letters are the accounts of friction and mounting bitterness between the officers of southern and northern backgrounds and sympathies. Capt. Gove hanging the flag of his country in his quarters at Camp Floyd, requiring that all brother officers entering properly salute and revere it, driving all others from his presence.

Debacle or no, the Utah Expedition seems to have been a highly valuable training maneuver for the big war that followed, and the roster of its officers contains many names familiar to students of the Civil War. Not the Grants and Shermans and Jacksons, but the young "fighting generals" who were killed early and thus missed immortality. Gove himself died a Brigadier at Gaines Mill in 1862. Others on the list include D. A. Russell, John Buford, Thomas, etc. Captains and lieutenants, then. Generals in a year or two. Dead generals, a year or so after that. (Two military posts in Wyoming subsequently were named for Russell and Buford, by men who never knew they had been through this country in their youth.)

Notables, too, who fought on the other side. Besides Johnston, there was tall, black-bearded Bee (Captain Bee then), the *beau sabreur* of the expedition. The later Butternut general who rallied his troops at first Bull Run by standing in his stirrups, his long hair flying, waving his sword toward the top of a ravine, and shouting, *"Look, men, there's Jackson's brigade! It stands there like a stone wall. Rally behind the Virginians!"* And thereby gave the South's most colorful general the nickname by which history knows him. There was Reno, and Sibley, the stiff-necked captain who was always facing court-martial, and who gave the army the tent and stove which are still a standard part of army equipment. So many southerners, in fact, that one still gets a rather hollow feeling reading down that roster—". . . resigned, March 30, 1861", ". . . resigned commission, April 1, 1861," and on and on.

Well, so much for the Expedition. When I found the book, I knew the story must be from the army viewpoint. Since the violence was centered around the supply trains, not the troops themselves, I chose to give the hero responsibility in supply.

For the material on the handcart companies, I was able to draw on family journals. Another great-grandfather joined the Mormon Church in 1842. In 1856, this John Linford set out for Zion, in company with his wife and three of his four half-grown sons. Steerage from England to New York, thence by cattle car to Iowa City, the jumping off place for the West. Saints were arriving here in such numbers that wagons could not be provided for them, and the handcart was substituted—the companies being organized as outlined in the story. They were caught behind the army, as related in the text, got off to a poor start, and were caught by winter in the mountains near South Pass.

To quote from the papers of Amasa Linford, John Linford's youngest son, and my grandfather, who made the trip as a boy of 11: "While traveling on the banks of the

(Continued on page 133)

A SOLID HIT WITH MEN EVERYWHERE

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THE SAINT IN THE SADDLE

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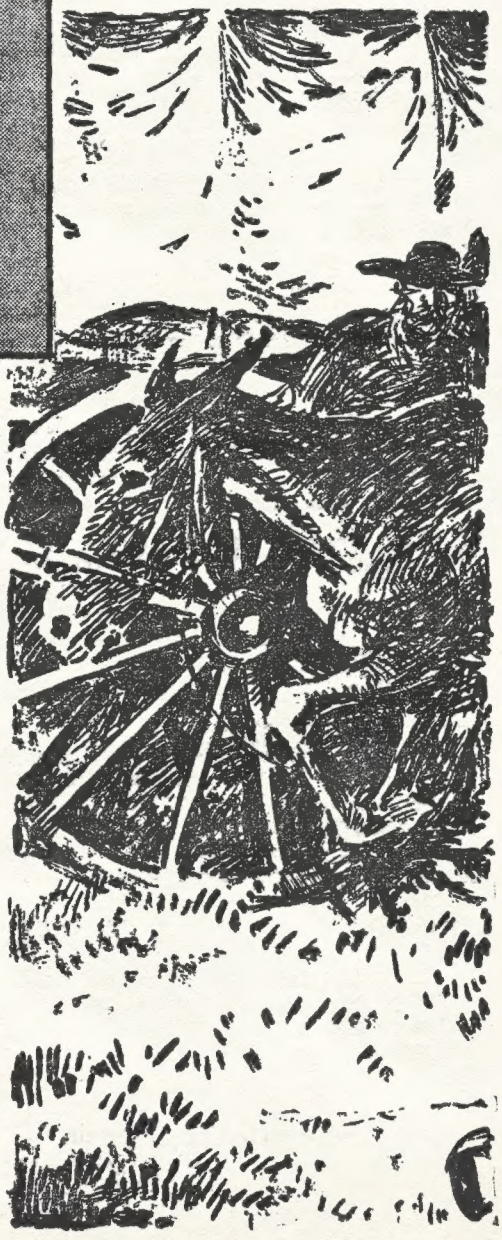

IN THE old converted warehouse labeled "Headquarters, Utah Expedition," Lieutenant Tyler Teacum, United States Army, stood loosely at attention, awaiting the pleasure of the gray-haired colonel of cavalry who sat at a desk by the wall.

The autumn afternoon was gray and chill. But the window beside the desk was open, and past it surged a restless human tide that clanged and thundered, storm-driven: Bluecoated soldiers and booted dragoons. Be-sabered officers with plumed slouch hats and tarnished gold epaulettes. Bullwhackers with waist-long beards and voices that cracked like thirty-foot whips. Pawnees and Kaws in blankets and castoff ends of regulation uniforms. Long-haired men in buckskins, pistol butts curving casually at hand. Cigar-smoking men in broadcloth —their stovepipe hats crammed with fat contracts and negotiable secrets of war, for sale for Mormon gold.

For President James Buchanan had

Three hundred fire-eyed mules thundered past into the circle of wagons.

By DEE LINFORD

ordered the Army to Utah to quell a reported rebellion, and Fort Leavenworth in September 1857 was a hotbed of military activity and intrigue. Troops already had reached the Rocky Mountains, but the Army, which had conquered Mexico and overrun half a continent exactly ten years before, now was blocked out of the Promised Land by a ragamuffin band of Mormon patriots. In Washington, Gentleman James Buchanan fumed at his red-faced generals, and Albert Sidney Johnston had been hustled west to get the Army into Utah—to save the President's face and the general's stars . . .

TY TEACUM was young and impressionable and possessed of an inquisitive turn of mind. He had read a little literature and a little history, and as he waited to be recognized he covertly studied the man whose appointment to command had cheered a sullen, discredited frontier corps. He had never before seen a man who so stirred his imagination. Never a man who could look so industrious and not move a muscle. A man who could swagger sitting down!

The name Sidney Johnston was one to conjure with in 1857. It was a hot-blooded young West Pointer, hero of the Black Hawk War, resigning his commission to enlist in the Army of the Republic of Texas, after Alamo. It was a war-wise private, rising to general overnight, displacing Felix Huston as commander-in-chief—defending his appointment with pistols on a field of honor. It was the Texas Secretary of War, plumping for Annexation—re-entering the United States Army as colonel of Texas Rifles, when the U. S. did intervene in the Texas affair. It was Zachary Taylor's staff officer, losing three horses in the heaviest fighting at Monterrey. It was an exacting peace-time commander of the Southwestern Military Department, endlessly analyzing the actions at Palo Alto and Rescac de la Palma. Pointing up their lessons to his able lieutenant-colonel—a man by the name of Robert E. Lee.

Teacum had no clear-cut notion that he was looking at a man whom fate would consider for immortality, only to reject in the end. He didn't know that Albert Sidney Johnston would be an abomination to Mormons as long as Deseret endured. He didn't know that Abe Lincoln presently would offer Johnston command of all the Union armies, in a greater and grimmer struggle—only to have the nation's leading soldier follow his native South in a rebellion whose magnitude would make Brigham Young's current insubordination look like a schoolroom insurrection.

But he did know that the Utah Expedition had a commander at last—a rider who was worthy of his mount. He knew that the new commandant had summoned him urgently from Bent's Fort on the Santa Fe trail for personal interview. And while he was hoping for assignment to the Army for Utah, he had soldiered long enough that he did not hope recklessly . . .

The colonel turned at last.

"Lieutenant Teacum?"

The eyes below the protruding forehead were like blue claymores that impaled the subaltern where he stood. Teacum nodded, in the fashion of a frontier soldier. Then he caught himself.

"Yes, sir!"

He repeated the salute which had passed unacknowledged minutes earlier. The colonel stood and the salute was returned, punctiliously. The claymore eyes dissected Teacum's dress, which was that of a civilian freighter, not of a lieutenant of cavalry.

Teacum held his breath. The colonel was impeccable, in uniform and manner. "Old Cavalier," he was called in the service. Old southern gentleman, old soldier's soldier, the colonel was known as a disciplinarian who stressed the regulations. He might not be aware that Teacum's dress had been specified in his orders.

"Kelcy—fetch Major Bridger."

The clipped voice crackled like a bundle of willows, broken over a knee. The clerk decamped, and the claymore eyes took note of Teacum's dress again. But they seemed to approve, rather than to condemn, and Teacum breathed easier. Teacum was only vaguely aware that he possessed certain visible qualities which colonels rejoiced to find in their lieutenants of the line—in uniform or out.

The colonel was tall and square for his years, but Teacum was taller and squarer. The colonel's hands were small and facile, Teacum's large and calloused. The colonel's features bore striking resemblance to the picture of Alexander Hamilton. But you didn't find faces like Teacum's in the history books. Teacum's was the rough-hewn face, humorous and aggressive, that had a way of turning up where things were being done, before the books were written. In the wagon trains, westering toward the wide horizon. On the river steamers, ascending uncharted channels. In the forests, splitting rails to buy books, to feed a hungry mind. . .

"I knew your father, in Mexico," the clipped voice said. "He was a soldier, and met a soldier's end. I saw your name on the officer rolls, and I thought of you in connection with a certain difficult and dangerous mission I wish to have undertaken. Be seated, Lieutenant, and we shall talk, frankly and confidentially."

Such unexpected words, from so great a man, were more disconcerting than a reprimand. Teacum eased his hundred and ninety pounds upon a wicker chair and waited in a fidget. The colonel dismissed the two remaining clerks and, with characteristic plain speech, came straight to the business between them.

"You are aware, Lieutenant, that the President and Commander-in-Chief has declared the Mormon people in Utah to be in rebellion against the authority of the United States. To be planning to secede from the Union, and to be massacring non-Mormon emigrants passing through Utah Territory to California."

Teacum nodded. But the blue eyes took no note of his nod.

"You are aware, as an Army officer concerned, that the President has appointed a civil governor of Utah—a governor who replaces and whose authority will supersede that of the prophet, Brigham Young. You are aware that the Army has

"Be seated, Lieutenant," the clipped voice said, "and we shall talk frankly."

been ordered to occupy Salt Lake City and insure acceptance of the governor and his regime. You are aware that the Mormon people are resisting the Army's advance, and that the expedition is not prospering."

THE Colonel, seated now, rested his elbows on the desk and steepled his fingers beneath his chin. The blue poniard eyes were on Teacum again. But they looked through him to staggering problems of logistics that must be solved before any kind of campaign could be organized against a hardy and resourceful adversary who was entrenched in the fastness of the Rocky Mountains, twelve hundred miles away.

"You may be aware, Lieutenant, that that expedition was ill-planned and criminally mismanaged in the beginning. General Harney, originally appointed to command it, had been held inactive here by personal enemies in Washington, abetted by weak-kneed politicians who order the Army into the field, then sabotage it with all their resources to prevent its reaching its destination—for fear that blood will be shed!

"The expedition's vanguard was ordered to start west two months ago, Lieutenant. Two regiments of infantry and a battery of artillery, ordered into the wilderness without cavalry support—and without a commander! And in mid-July! A dangerously late date to begin a march to the mountains!"

Again Teacum nodded. The clipped voice talked on, however, seemingly unaware of its listener. It was the indignant and impatient voice of the professional soldier, railing against the abysmal hesitance of the civil authority to which the military was subject.

"This vanguard has now reached the Green or Spanish River, some nine hundred miles out. It is still four hundred miles from Salt Lake City, with the mountains in between. And it is now September. Another month will see the passes blocked by snow!"

The clipped voice suddenly was vibrant with contained fury. One hand jerked up to indicate a map of the wilderness on the wall behind the desk. Teacum's eyes flicked to the chart and saw depicted there the full ignominious performance of the United States Army, in the affair which was coming to be called the Mormon War.

A heavy line, marked in red crayon, represented the line of march and the progress of two months' operation in the Great American Desert. Northwest across Kansas Territory to the Platte River. Up the Platte, past Forts Kearney and Laramie, to the Sweetwater River. Up the Sweetwater to South Pass. Down the Big Sandy to the Spanish River.

At the Spanish River, the red line ended. Curled up like a soft wire jammed against an anvil. Beyond the river lay more desert, then Fort Bridger, now a Mormon stronghold. Beyond Bridger bristled the formidable Uinta and Wasatch Mountains. The bleak and insurmountable Walls of Zion. Walls which the blast of Buchanan's Joshua-horn had failed to tumble down.

"Brigham Young has issued a treasonous proclamation!" the clipped voice crackled. "If the Army crosses the Spanish River, *he* will interpret it as a hostile act, and will meet force with force! He has placed all Utah under martial law, and is conscripting all able-bodied men for what he calls the Mormon Battalion—an evolution of the old Nauvoo Legion which engaged the Gentile Militia in Missouri and Illinois.

"This battalion has taken the field, under the command of Young's lieutenant-general of militia, Daniel Wells, to fight a guerrilla action. Wells has scorched the earth between the Spanish River and the mountains. He has fortified Bridger and the passes beyond, and has two thousand horsemen in front of my vanguard, which is afoot!"

The colonel had left his chair to pace the space of floor behind his desk. He was ridden by anger and a knowledge of the futility of anger. The blue eyes glowered at intangible restraints with which he could not come to grips.

"My regimental commanders, understandably, are confused and hesitant. No one is in authority, and they have no orders. They have been expecting to be overtaken by their commander, from day to day, ever since they left Leavenworth—never realizing that they had none!

"Their orders when they left here did not read for war, because it was not expected then that Brigham Young would have the effrontery to engage the United States in war. Also, it was expected that their commander should overtake the vanguard before it made contact with the enemy. So what has happened? One infantry regiment, lacking orders and anyone to give orders, has heeded Young's warning and turned back. The other has defied it, and has crossed the river.

"Today brings reports that the regiment which pushed on has been attacked! Not the companies themselves, but the supply trains supporting them. If this report is correct, then the war which the politicians ordered then sought to sidestep has now begun!"

TYLER TEACUM received the news in silence. One part of him, the part that was soldier by instinct and training, was attracted by the prospect of a contest of arms. Another part, a part that was civilized and rational, was sickened at the thought of a fractricidal conflict between countrymen. Dismayed by the continued persecution of a dissenting sect of zealots which had fled into the wilderness to escape persecution, like the Children of Israel out of Egypt—only to have their oppressors follow them across a thousand barren miles to rout them from their hard-won haven.

But both his exhiliration and his dismay were lost upon his stormy-eyed commandant. Or, being observed, were misunderstood. The colonel paused in his pacing to fix him with a crusty stare.

"And in case you are wondering at my present inactivity—as is all the world—I'll remind you that I'm saddled with an ass of a politician, whom I must escort to Utah. This politician will not leave without his wife. And Milady does not have her boxes packed yet! Meantime my vanguard is disintegrating. And if reports of the guerrilla successes are reliable, my commanders may be cut off and forced to surrender before I can relieve them. In which case, Brigham Young would acquire added arrogance—and ordnance—with which to prosecute his treasonous war!"

The colonel's scorn was exceeded only by his rage. The two were merged in his voice, and the tone of it cut like a whetted knife.

Teacum had a hunch that the offending governor-appointee would not enjoy his association with the commander of his escort, in the wilderness. But it was merely a passing thought. There was still no hint as to why he had been summoned from Bent's to Leavenworth, hastily, and in mufti, to report to Albert Sidney Johnston. Nor was it for a lieutenant to demand knowledge of his colonel's plans. But questions were festering in Teacum's head, and the colonel did seem to expect some sort of intelligent response to his revelations.

"But are you not in touch with your vanguard?" he ventured. "By express?"

"I have reason to believe that I am *now* in touch!" the colonel said testily. "But one does not always know, across a thousand miles of wilderness. And you should know, Lieutenant—"

The colonel broke off without saying what the lieutenant should know. His eyes weighed and measured before he spoke again.

"You should know, Lieutenant, that the first two dispatch bearers I sent west after taking command disappeared, utterly, together with their messages."

"Disappeared?"

Teacum looked at him sharply, to see if he were joking. He was not.

"I ordered them an escort, Lieutenant. But my own staff was not functioning then, and I entrusted the matter to Harney's imbeciles. Those astounding strategists computed that the expresses would overtake the vanguard at Fort Laramie, and gave the escort orders for that post. On arriving at Laramie, my couriers found the regiments had cleared Laramie and were obliged to go on alone."

Teacum could have matched the example of inefficiency in the frontier command with tales of his own. But this was not the place for barracks gossip.

"A Major Boggs and a Lieutenant Hines. Dropped from sight as completely as if the ground had swallowed them. I mean to find if they are dead, Lieutenant. And, if dead, whether they were killed by casual Indians, murdered by

Mormons, or whether they were betrayed by persons they trusted. Persons who knew of the express they carried, and wished to intercept it."

The ugly implication sank into Teacum's brain like a driven knife. "You mean that you suspect treachery? From within the Army itself?" he asked hesitantly.

The Scottish feature turned dour. "I must deny you the privilege of putting words into my mouth, Lieutenant. If I had justification for such an assumption, my duty would be to address it to the War Department, not to a subaltern of my command! However—"

The stern features relented, observing Teacum's distress. But the blue eyes still held steel shadows, such as Teacum had seen in men's eyes in battle.

The man would look much the same, five years hence, at a place called Shiloh Chapel in Tennessee, when learning he must die from a wound which should not have been fatal. A place where Confederate General Johnston would fall in the flush of victory, after catching Grant and Sherman both asleep—a feat which no other Southern soldier would ever duplicate. And Jefferson Davis would say to his people, "Without doing injustice to the living, it may be safely said that our loss is irreparable"—a melancholy prediction which implacable time would fulfill.

But Teacum was mindful of the present, not the future. Mindful of a voice which, more kindly now, was still touched with fury.

"However, it is my duty to investigate the possibility you have mentioned. I will confess that I am dissastisfied with explanations of the escort's orders. Also, while I am fully aware that infantry cannot cope with cavalry in wilderness warfare, an elementary axiom which seems to have eluded the planners of this expedition, it still would seem—"the blue eyes glowered—"that twelve hundred foot soldiers with a battery and a siege train in their support should be able to protect their own wagons. Unless, of course, someone in authority is being bribed or is in sympathy with the Mormon cause. In either case, I mean to learn the truth."

Teacum's restless brain, forging ahead of leading statements and rumination, began to perceive the probable nature of his assignment. A military commission, perhaps, to investigate conditions in the field. A board of inquiry, asking guarded, futile questions. First endorsements and second endorsements. Respectfully submitted and referred. Mountains of paper, tied by tough red tape. Neatly stored in musty vaults to yellow and gather dust, while the abuses and crimes went on . . .

"A formal investigation would be futile, Lieutenant," the clipped voice went on, anticipating his cynicism. "The appearance of a board of inquiry would only serve warning of my suspicions, and would turn up nothing of use. Besides, there are certain bomb-proof officers in my command who are immune to official inquiries and action."

TEACUM began to perspire. It was one thing to hear your commandant rail, idly perhaps, against civilian interference and bungling in military affairs. It was quite another thing to hear a high officer—idly perhaps—level serious charges against his associates in the system, both up and down the scale. There were many things went on in any army which a lieutenant of the line was wise to be blind and deaf to, unless he chose to stew in another's juice. But this—this was straight from the horse's mouth!

"It is my thought, Lieutenant," the colonel went on, seemingly unaware of his junior's distress, "that this inquiry will be made most effectively by an intelligent officer, posing as a civilian. Posing as a civilian wagonmaster, to be explicit, in the employ of Russell and Majors, who hold the transportation contracts to Utah. He would keep his eyes and ears open, and would report to me, personally, when I arrive at western headquarters. That way, if something was turned up, I could handle it on the spot, as brigade commander in the field, and refer it to Washington as a *fait accompli*."

Teacum was still perspiring. But he felt a quickening of interest, and of sympathy, for the bedeviled man before him. Here was no gossip-loving, back-biting stuffed-blouse, inflicting his views upon a

subordinate, to use them against him at a later time. Here, instead, was an officer of iron integrity, determined to stamp out treachery and criminal negligence within his command, regardless of where the chips might fall.

Teacum also could appreciate his superior's extraordinary caution in handling the assignment out of routine channels. His disconcerting frankness in discussing the matter with one he could trust. Already, there had been insidious hints of corruption in high places. Of sold information and graft in supply, reaching up to the Secretary of War himself. And the thought gave Teacum pause. If he accepted such an undertaking, unsanctioned by the War Department, he could be conniving at a dangerous insubordination that might in the end be damaging to political generals and courtesy colonels in Washington. An indiscretion which could get him cashiered or shot.

"I am told, Lieutenant, that you have had considerable experience and good luck in wilderness supply."

"On the Santa Fe route," Teacum answered. "None on the Overland."

But the colonel did not seem displeased with the answer. "Conditions, I understand, are much the same. And, on the Overland, you will not be known—an indispensable qualification for the man who fills this mission. I should remark, Lieutenant, that this officer will serve, in effect, as my personal spy. A spy, not only upon the known enemy, but upon possible enemies within our own ranks. You are familiar with the historic treatment accorded spies in time of war. And this, I'm afraid, is war."

The blue eyes plunged into Teacum's, as if to daunt him at the outset, if he were to be daunted at all. But Teacum was fired with enthusiasm for the task, and with an intense loyalty for his commander. He was able to withstand the gaze, and to return its challenge.

"For these reasons, Lieutenant, utmost secrecy is required, both from you and from me. For these reasons, also, the assignment is offered on a volunteer basis. You may decline it, if you choose, and return to your regiment. You may also ask any questions that may have occurred to you."

"One question, sir," Teacum said, thinking and speaking boldly. "If I find evidence of treason—treason of an urgent nature, demanding immediate action—am I to communicate with your regimental commanders, or handle the details myself?"

The blue eyes glinted. "If there is treason of an urgent nature, affecting the welfare of the Army, you are authorized to handle it yourself. But be discreet. There are officers in the vanguard who can do no wrong—commit no treason—in the eyes of officials in Washington. So, be circumspect. Don't involve yourself in counter charges of treason against the Army."

"Could you speak plainer, sir?"

"I can speak very plain. Let yourself be arrested, and you promptly will be reported as a deserter, from Bent's. Involve me, and I shall disavow you. In justification of my position, I repeat. You are at liberty to decline the undertaking."

Teacum stood up. "When do I start?"

"Tonight. An ambulance leaves at midnight, for Laramie. It is drawn by six horses, and should arrive in ten days. A Russell and Majors train is waiting at Laramie—for escort. You will carry papers from Mr. Russell, authorizing you to assume authority over the train. Upon arrival, you will proceed immediately to the west."

"Without escort?"

"Without escort. If we are dealing with traitors, we must know them. An escort would discourage contact. My last express to the west, which I trust went through, placed Colonel Alexander of the Tenth Infantry in command of all forces until my arrival, and instructed him to proceed to Bridger's post and occupy it. You will deliver your train to that point."

AS THE colonel spoke, an inner door opened to admit a lank, raw-boned man in home-made boots, fringed leather trousers, and a blue Army shirt—tieless and buttoned tightly at the throat. The newcomer glanced disinterestedly at Teacum, and made expert use of a cuspidor at the colonel's feet.

Teacum's startled eyes dropped to the

colonel's varnished boots, but found no offending stain of brown. The newcomer's bemused gaze touched him comfortably, and the lantern jaw resumed its rhythmic action.

The colonel stirred. "Lieutenant Teacum—Major Bridger, my chief of scouts, and private encyclopedia on the wilderness."

The grizzled face became attentive. The disinterested eyes observant.

"Plain Jim Bridger, Lootenant. An' mighty proud."

A sun-cracked hand bigger than Teacum's own came out like a boom head. The lieutenant winced in its crushing grip.

"Mr. Teacum has accepted the mission we discussed," the colonel said. "Perhaps you can advise him on the trail and conditions generally."

"Watch the Sioux an' Cheyennes to South Pass," the storied mountain man said succinctly, "an' the Mormonies from thar'. Injuns is varmints, sarpints, an' pizen. But Injuns ain't in it with a long-tailed Mormonie!"

The grayish eyes glinted vindictively. The colonel smiled.

"Major Bridger feels no charity where our opponents are concerned. At the outset of this trouble, Brigham Young expropriated his trading post, and now threatens to burn it, if he cannot hold against the Army. But the major's loss is our gain. He has volunteered his services for the campaign, and his knowledge of the country is worth a regiment!"

"An' keep a weather-eye on ol' black Brazos," the mountain man continued, bulking tall and somehow monumental against the window light. "Comes to thievin', he cain't hold a candle to Brigham. But he's bad medicine an'll bar' watchin'."

"Brazos—yes," the colonel echoed. "I had forgotten. He operates a trading post at Great Tar Spring, near the headwaters of the Spanish River. Calls himself captain, I'm told. But as near as I can determine he signs his own commission. He is reported to be a personal enemy of Brigham Young. But warfare makes strange allies, and his allegiance in this disturbance seems obscure. One thing is certain. Located as he is, he would stand to profit from a long campaign. And back of most treason, I've observed, you will find the silver dollar!"

The clock on the wall struck the hour, and the colonel turned brisk.

"And now, Lieutenant—you understand that my time is not my own. Doubtless, too, you have preparations of your own to make. So—deliver your train to Colonel Alexander at Bridger, and meet me at the Spanish River, in say—six weeks!"

Salutes were exchanged, and Teacum was nearing the door when the clipped voice stabbed him between the shoulder blades.

"One other thing, Lieutenant. If our losses in commissary are as heavy as reports indicate, we cannot afford to lose your train. Just how you will get it through, without escort, I must leave to your own invention. But I've heard of your resourcefulness in keeping Bent's supplied throughout the Thunder Bull siege, and I'm confident you will succeed."

Teacum took pleasure in the compliment. But the colonel forestalled his thanks with a bleak smile. "Wait until you see me again, Lieutenant. Then I will dare you to thank me—for anything!"

CHAPTER II

WAGONS WEST!

ONE month later, at Devil's Gate on the Sweetwater River, inside a corral formed by fifty government "J. Mitchell-wagons," Trainmaster Tyler Teacum sat on a boulder before a sagebrush fire. The moon was down, and the dog star glimmered like an evil watching eye. And the night wind carried a battle hymn, as thin and sourceless as a coyote wail—as vengeful as the words of a dying prophet, in Carthage jail.

Old Squaw-killer Johnston is on his way,
Dooda, dooda;
The Mormon people for to slay;
Oh, dooda day!
But when he comes, we'll have some fun,
Dooda, dooda;
To see his soldiers turn and run;
Oh, dooda day!

Then let us be on hand
By Brigham Young to stand!
And if our enemies do appear,
We'll sweep them from the land!

The October night was chill, and Teacum saw his teamsters shiver about the fire. He knew that they did not shiver from the cold alone, but he stood to heap more brush on the dying fire. For a fire could cheer as well as warm, and it served as a comforting beacon of defiance to the hidden guerrillas who heckled the camp with song.

The mules were securely picketed in the little grass swale between the corral and the river, under the guard of ten armed men. Another ten were posted about the corral itself, with orders to shoot at the first suspicious movement in the dark, and Teacum felt entirely safe against attack. The only thing he feared was fear itself, and he hoped a brighter fire would push back the apprehensions which had been eating at his teamsters' peace of mind in the two weeks since the train had cleared Fort Laramie.

He was aware that the fire would make targets of them all, in case of a shooting attack. But, as yet, the Mormons had shown no stomach for the war of annihilation they had promised the invaders if they crossed the Spanish River.

For more than a week now, the Mormon cavalry had harried his train like buffalo wolves—disrupting progress by day with feinting attacks that sent the wagons into corral formation, regularly on the hour; disrupting sleep at night with their infernel heckling songs and shouts. But there had been no shooting, and Teacum thought by now that there would be none. So he heaped the fire high, determined not to let the hecklers get his goat. But it seemed that he had succeeded merely in illuminating fear, not in banishing it from his camp.

The rising flames danced on the canvas of the white-hooded wagons, casting gargantuan silhouettes upon the gray cliff walls. The flickering light glinted in the eyes of his teamsters, as they listened with one ear to the threatening chant of the Mormonie men, listening with the other to the dire predictions of Black Brazos, Indian trader and enigma man of the western wilderness.

"Boys, you won't never make it through," the trader warned darkly. "They's two thousan' Mormonies between here an' the Spanish River. I know. I just come through. They've burned the country off till the birds would starve to death, tryin' to fly acrost it. The road is laned clean to Black's Fork with the bones o' cattle an' mules that died in the harness, a-tryin' it. An' then, well, there is them double-damned Jayhawkin' Saints!"

The trader had ridden into the wagon camp an hour before, and straightway had offered the company the benefit of his counsel. He was standing now, bulking huge in the firelight—a picturesque figure in his beaded buckskin clothes and magnificent ebony beard.

"Know who that is out there, hollerin' that hymn o' hate?"

An artful raconteur and alarmist, he paused for effect, letting the question sink in. Whatever his purpose in scaremongering, he seemed to be succeeding, and Teacum cast about for some method of silencing him.

"Well, I'll tell you who it is. It's the Danites. The Seventy Destroyin' Angels! Porter Rockwell an' Killerbill Hickman, an' all the rest o' that devil's crew. They're backed up by Dan'l Wells an' Bob Burton, an' the hull damned Nauvoo Legion. They got artillery an' they got Lot Smith's cavalry, that rides like Rooshian Cossacks. Yellin' like banshees! A-bushwhackin' on horseback! An' the plain, bare-nekked truth is that it's you bonus-boys they are inter-ested in fightin', not the Pres'dint's heroes. They ain't got to fight the sojers, an' they never intended to. They stop the victual wagons, an' the sojers will hand over their guns—just like they been a-doing!"

THE mountain man's bright black eyes made a deliberate round of the squatting teamsters, passing quickly over Ty Teacum. It was plain that he had still more depressing news to impart, and Teacum decided to channel the conversation to brighter topics.

"Where are the *troops* now, Captain Brazos?" he inquired. But the answering grin warned him that this topic, too,

was dear to the trader's scare-mongering heart.

"The troops? Wal, you wouldn't have no trouble a-findin' them—if you get that far. They are strung out clean from South Pass to Black's Fork. Supply trains stretched out a hundred miles. Bulls an' mules a-dyin' in harness. Just foller the bones, young man. Foller the bones, to Buchanan's hell!"

"Where is Alexander?" Teacum demanded patiently. "Colonel Alexander, Tenth Infantry?"

"Alexander? *Ol' Lady Alexander?*" The grin relished the words, and Teacum comprehended that he hadn't bettered the tone of the conversation. "Now there is a worried lieutenant-colonel! Why, he's so old he can't walk, an' can't straddle a remount horse. Rides a ambulance, with a foot warmer! Don't—"

"Answer my question!" Teacum said sharply. "Has he reached Bridger's Post?"

The black eyes quickened at Teacum's tone. But the gloating grin did not waver. "Oh, yeah. The Ol' Lady got to Bridger's a week ago. Went up with fixed bayonets an' a siege train, a-tearin' the ground like a ring-tailed bull. But Bob Burton had burned the fort an' pulled out. Burned the grass an' brush off too—clean to Echo Canyon. The Ol' Lady is a-squattin' on the ruins now, wonderin' what to do next. What mules an' bulls he got through with are dyin' on their feet, an' the sojers are eatin' them up, 'fore they are cold! Sojers even got to haul their own firewood on hand-sleds, on account of they ain't a mule in camp strong enough to hold up a harness. Army's conscriptin' the teamsters, to make 'em fight an' stand guard duty. Sojers an' bonus-boys desertin' in packs, collectin' Brig Young's offer o' food an' fifty dollars an' passage to Californee. Boys, I'm a-tellin' you—"

"And we got no time to listen," Teacum said brusquely, standing. "It's about time to spread out the bed sacks, men. We start early in the morning."

But the teamsters refused to look at him. Refused to stop listening. The trader's eyes brightened as he observed the men's rebellious mood, and he fed that mood on fresher fears, like sticks to a rising fire.

"I'm only a-tryin' to wise you up to what's ahead," he protested, his voice the embodiment of innocence. "If I was in your place, I'd want to know. Hell, I passed three burnt trains b'tween here an' Ham's Fork. Met the teamsters, walkin' to Bridger. Froze an' hungry an' eternally gee-deein' the Army that drug 'em into war without pertection—tellin' them it was something else!"

"No trouble a-findin' the troops," Black Brazos said. "Just foller the bones."

That one struck close to home, reminding all who needed a reminder that Teacum had reversed the train's original orders and had taken the wagons from Laramie unescorted. And while Teacum bootlessly damned the luck that had put him afoul of this garrulous gossip-monger, the guerrillas' heckling song swelled louder in the night.

Uncle Sam has sent, I understand,
Dooda, dooda;
A Missouri mule to rule our land;
Oh, dooda day!
But when he comes, the truth I'll tell,
Dooda, dooda;
Our boys will run him down to hell;
Oh, dooda day!
Then let us be on hand
By Brigham Young to stand . . .

Once, more, the dusty, whiskered wagoneers stirred uneasily and Teacum gauged their tempers carefully before he spoke again. They were a two-fisted lot, with all their share of fortitude, or they would not have been in the wilderness at all, earning the bonus that Russell and Majors offered to teamsters on the "Salt Lake run." But this was not their war, and they had been promised protection which had not materialized. They hadn't had to fight yet. But the cold weather was already upon them, and they all knew that to lose their train and be set afoot in this howling, wind-lashed desolation was death as certain as any fired from a Mormon gun.

Moreover, the hardships endured since leaving the Platte had been daunting. Bridges and ferries had been destroyed, and the desert burned black as the fire-swept regions of hell. Already, there had been long forced drives and dry camps, between the few damp swales where the foliage was too green to burn. Already, the mules were failing. And all the while, the threat of attack. The loss of sleep at night.

The strain was beginning to tell. Tempers were frayed raw, and fists had been flying on the slightest provocation. Rumors of burned trains and teamsters set afoot to freeze were now confirmed by a man who knew. Rumors, more disturbing yet, of teamsters forced into military service at Bridger, instead of the promised transportation back to civilization.

FEAR and resentment were mirrored on the taut faces that now looked at him accusingly. Resentment against Ty Teacum, who had wheedled them into leaving Laramie without escort. If he didn't handle them with gloves, he'd have a mutiny on his hands.

"Well," he mentioned reasonably, breaking an uneasy silence, "it's a long two hundred miles back to Laramie. We're nearer than that to Bridger. And we've corn and barley for the mules. On top of that, Dawson's and Whipple's bull trains are not far ahead. They've got escort, and mules will soon catch bulls, on any trail."

He had been riding hard the angle of the bull trains, ever since they'd quit the Platte. Dangling the ox trains' escort before his teamsters' eyes as bait to keep them on the go, covering the hostile miles. But once again the trader had a devastating answer.

"They ain't any bull trains ahead. That's what I been a-tryin' to tell you. Lot Smith ketched Dawson an' Whipple both the same night, no more'n a mile apart. Cut 'em off from their escort. Burned 'em both out.

" 'For the Lord's sake, don't burn my wagons!' Dawson blubbered, when they'd run his stock off an' come ridin' in to finish the job.

"Smith, he grinned like a cat eatin' cream. Says, 'Hit's for the Lord's sake I got to burn 'em, mobocrat!' Then he helped himself to what he needed from the wagons, said a prayer o' thanks for the same—thanks to the Lord, not to Dawson an' Buchanan—an' set the rest o' the cargo on fire!"

The black eyes made another round of the squatting teamsters, calling them to witness the richness of Mormon humor.

"Boys, you purely ain't never seen a fire, till you see twenty tons o' gov'ment sowbelly go up. Salt a-poppin' like popcorn! Why, I seen the flare that night, from twenty miles off. Smelt it that far too, by gum! Bacon an' coffee an' flour a-bakin'. Smelt mighty good, I reckon, to them hungry skinners!

"Next day, I met Dawson an' Whipple an' their whackers, hoofin' it a hundred mile to Bridger. Cold an' hungry an' lookin' poorly. Cussin' the Army red, white, an' blue. O' course, some o' them might make it in . . ."

The black eyes centered on Teacum now, and the soldier was aware of the challenge they hurled. Black Brazos was baiting him, deliberately. And Teacum was reminded of the warning spoken by Jim Bridger, echoed by Colonel Johns-

ton: *Keep a weather eye on old Black Brazos.*

All Teacum's instincts bade him take his mule whip down and run the gossipmonger out of camp. But his intelligence overrode the impulse. He was out here looking for traitors. Maybe he had hooked one already.

"But what's the answer, Brazos?" he complained. "Likely, I wouldn't make it back to Laramie, the shape my mules are in. There's no grass that way, either."

The trader shrugged, vastly. "My post is forty miles north o' here. Good road, good grass, all the way. You'd be welcome to put in there, till things cool down."

Once again, the mountain man's face had assumed an expression of angelic righteousness. But his little pig eyes were hard and bright. And, once again, Teacum's thoughts pulled in two directions. If Brazos *had* cast his lot with the enemy, Teacum would certainly learn of it if he took his wagons to Great Tar Spring. But he would almost certainly lose his train. And the colonel's orders had been specific on that point. He wasn't to risk the lading.

He shook his head, regretfully. "I appreciate the invitation, Brazos. I'm sure I understand the spirit in which it was offered. But forty miles is a lot of miles, and my orders are for Bridger. You know the Army."

"That's right," a new voice agreed. "We know the Army! We know it as it is. We've seen it in action out here, eh, Brazos?"

The voice was suave and good-humored—a little pompous. Teacum was surprised to see that it came from the man who was minding Brazos' pack horses. He left the horses now to fend for themselves, and came into the firelight. Teacum was struck by the paradox in his manner and speech and dress.

THE man was young. As young as Teacum. And as tall. As powerful in build. Like Brazos himself, he wore a beard. But, unlike the other's luxurious brush, this beard was short and meticulously trimmed—a fastidious Vandyke which would have honored the chin of a foreign diplomat or a Ford's Theater stage villain. The beard was dark, the eyes an astonishing green. For clothing, the stranger wore a late-cut homespun suit, wrinkled at the crotch from riding. His trousers were tucked into flat-heeled boots—square-toed and highly polished. On his head, he wore a wide-brimmed California hat.

Neither the newcomer's appearance nor his manners nor his speech was that of a jack-man to a wilderness Indian trader. Nor did he have the look of an independent fur factor, who might have fallen into casual company with Brazos. His hands were gloved—the infallible mark of a tenderfoot. Moreover, the exposed portion of his face was a furious, boiled red. His eyes, similarly, were sore and inflamed from the merciless prairie sun and wind. Whoever he was, he had not been in the wilderness long. Likely, he was fresh from Salt Lake.

Was Brazos scare-mongering in the service of the Mormons?

All through Teacum's long speculation, the newcomer had been talking, easily. Impressing the soldier with his knowledge of the expedition, its organization and its failings.

"If the politicians had left Harney in command of your precious Army, he would have been in Salt Lake City by this time. But they tie Harney down, and give the command to P. F. Smith, who was dying at the time. With Smith out, Alexander comes into command, by default. And Alexander has never known where he was. He has fifteen hundred soldiers at his disposal. And he can't even give you freighters an escort!"

The stranger's tone was very casual—too casual to be casual at all. The green eyes were arrogant, but guarded. And Brazos, pointedly, did not introduce him to the company. Teacum already had put him down for a Mormon spy—Brazos down as a Mormon collaborator. And yet—something in the picture did not fit.

"Alexander hasn't put on any inspiring show out here," Teacum admitted, seeking to draw the green-eyed man out. "But don't draw any wrong conclusions about the Army. Albert Sidney Johnston is on his way out now. When he takes over, you'll see an Army."

"Sidney Johnston!" The other spat the word as something offensive to his mouth. *"Johnston is on his way!* That's all we've heard out here for the last two months! And where is Johnston? The Lord only knows. The Lord and maybe old Jim Bridger! Nobody else!"

The Mormon spy system must be very efficient, Teacum was thinking. Then, before he could reply, the other's irascibility took an unexpected turn.

"You civilians are as blind as the soldiers. You don't even know you're being sold. You and the Army and the whole United States!"

Teacum admitted the charge. He didn't know it.

"Why do you think Harney was removed from command?" the green-eyed man demanded sharply. "Why do you think a dying man was appointed, and Alexander shoved in as next of rank? Alexander, who isn't fit to command a company of dragtail recruits? Why do you think Johnston doesn't show up?"

Again, Teacum confessed his ignorance.

"The record is there, for all but a blind man to see!" he was told. "Who reached down and plucked Johnston out of Texas—Johnston that quit the Army as captain twenty years before—and set him up as Colonel, over a lot of good captains and majors who remained in the service? You don't know. But I know. It was Jefferson Davis, Pierce's Secretary of War. Johnston's old West Point bunkmate! And who is Jefferson Davis? He is the champion of slavery and the mouthpiece of southern Secessionists. Plotting a rebellion that will someday show Brigham Young up for the true patriot he is!"

CHAPTER III

CANDIDATE FOR A FIRING SQUAD

TEACUM'S amazement at the other's intimate knowledge of Army affairs mounted almost to consternation. A moment earlier, he'd written his visitor off as a Mormon agent. But now he was

DON WINS A WELCOME NOW!
HOW ABOUT SUPPER AT THE HOUSE TONIGHT, DON? MY SISTER WANTS TO MEET YOU.
WONDERFUL! I WANT TO MEET HER, TOO!
FUNNY HOW SOME FELLOWS WORRY ABOUT MEETING PEOPLE.
WELL, I USED TO ... BUT NOT SINCE I SWITCHED TO LIFEBUOY!
LIFEBUOY IS THE ONLY SOAP ESPECIALLY MADE TO STOP B.O. — CONTAINS AN EXCLUSIVE PURIFYING INGREDIENT — MY DAILY LIFEBUOY BATH GIVES ME LASTING PROTECTION.
THIS IS FUN, DON! YOU'RE ALWAYS WELCOME HERE.
AND I'LL KEEP WELCOME ... WITH LIFEBUOY!
LIFEBUOY HAS AN AMAZING PURIFYING INGREDIENT THAT STOPS B.O. YOUR DAILY LIFEBUOY BATH IS SO REFRESHING, TOO! USE LIFEBUOY FOR A WEEK, AND YOU'LL USE IT FOR LIFE!
Used in the homes of 40 million Americans
LIFEBUOY HEALTH SOAP
ANOTHER FINE LEVER PRODUCT

talking like a disgruntled Army officer.

"Who was it told Buchanan the lie that there was rebellion in Utah?" the tirade went on. "You don't know that, either. But I know. It was John B. Floyd, Buchanan's Secretary of War. And who is Floyd? He's another of Jeff Davis' West Point cronies and yes-men. I'm telling you, mister, there is going to be a fight over slavery. When it breaks, you'll see an insurrection like there has never been in history. And you'll find Johnston and Davis and Floyd at the head of it. Back of them, you'll find Lee and Jackson and Jeb Stuart—and all the other fine southern gentlemen that Davis and Floyd had favored and pushed to the top while they've controlled the War Department. Why, hell! The last eight years, an officer born north of the Mason and Dixon hasn't had a chance!"

The man was speaking more than ever like a dissatisfied Army officer now. This fact, added to the paradox of his manner and appearance, and the knowledge he displayed of the Army and the expedition, plunged Teacum into reckless speculation. Was it not highly possible that the man *was* an officer? One of the traitors whose existence was suspected by Colonel Johnston? Was that why he had been so reluctant to show his face at the fire, and had remained in the shadows with the horses, until he had seen that Brazos was failing in his attempts to turn the wagons back?

"How do you know so much about the record, mister?" he asked the green-eyed man. "Where do you get all your information on the War Department and slavery and Jeff Davis? From the Indian medicine men and the *Windigo*? Or do you read the stars?"

"I make it my business to know what goes on in the country," the other retorted. "And I can tell you this. Davis and Ford manufactured this rebellion, in Washington—to get as many troops as far away from the States as they can, before election. They want this expedition to bog down, so that they can move the whole United States Army to Utah. Once they get it there, they'll keep it there, watching a few peaceful Indians and Mormons. The only officers left in Washington will be Davis' Secesh West Pointers. They'll be in an excellent position to seize the government—if the Republicans should nominate a Free Soiler president, and elect him!"

Teacum didn't know that his visitor was merely echoing the current propaganda line of the Mormon press—theories which would crystallize into firm convictions among later-generation Mormons, and which would find more than a little support in the history of the years ahead. But he knew that what he'd heard was black sedition and treason as well. And he was, before all other things, a soldier.

He toyed with the thought of making his identity known and placing both his callers in irons, for transport to Bridger—just for the secret satisfaction it gave him. But he knew he couldn't do it. He knew he was on the track of bigger quarry than mere seditious fur traders. He'd have to play it more cunning.

"You might know what you're talking about," he conceded. "But why tell me? What do you want me to do about it?"

"There is damned little you *can* do about it!" the other exclaimed. "But you're a fool if you continue to be taken in by it. These other men are fools, if they let you risk their lives to deliver these wagons to Bridger—merely to further the traitors' schemes!"

"Maybe you're right," Teacum said, still to draw him out. "But you haven't told me where we have any alternative."

"Captain Brazos has offered you sanctuary at his post," the green-eyed man reminded. And Teacum nodded profoundly. They were coming to it, now. Whether this man was a Mormon agent or a treasonous Army deserter, one thing was certain. He and Brazos were associates. Either way, the trader was a candidate for a firing squad.

"But our contract reads for Bridger," he said cannily, wondering if he would get a concrete offer. "And we all have several months' time coming. We have to show up at Bridger to collect."

The green eyes took the bait. They communed for a single instant with the black eyes of Captain Brazos. Then they swung back to Teacum.

"I think there would be no difficulty in that direction. Captain Brazos would, I'm sure, assume the responsibilities of

Russell and Majors on the matter of wages. He might even offer a substantial bonus—in clean, bankable gold. And you'd all go on living, in the bargain!"

Teacum's teeth clicked audibly. There it was. He was being bribed. Bribed to turn over a whole trainload of Army quartermaster goods—likely for transport on to Salt Lake. By pack string, he guessed. Through a roundabout mountain route that would circumvent the Army at Bridger.

"But what about us?" he countered, not yet satisfied that he grasped the full picture. "Sometime or other the Army would get around to looking us up. I doubt they'd believe we lost fifty wagons and three hundred mules in a badger hole."

The green-eyed man was smiling. "No difficulty there, either. The wagons would be returned to this general locality and burned. There would be your alibi. You men could remain at Brazos' post all winter. Play Boston and hunt elk and get to know the Shoshone girls. That would beat standing guard duty at Bridger at ten dollars a month. In the spring, you could get back to Leavenworth, tell your story, and have evidence here on the trail to back it up."

"And how do you know what story we would tell?"

"I give you credit for possessing normal intelligence. Having been paid for your train, there would only be one story you could tell. Lot Smith captured you and burned you out."

THERE was a ruthless purpose in the polished voice, a matching ulterior calculation in the greeny eyes. Teacum's imagination took a wild jump, coming down on different ground. Supposing this pair was not serving the Mormons, after all. Supposing the two were serving themselves, instead—engaging in land-piracy, pure and simple. Robbing the government trains, reselling the loot to the beleaguered Saints at mountain prices.

He did an instant's calculation, and was staggered with its results. The lading of his wagons had an approximate value of two hundred thousand dollars, Leavenworth index. At mountain prices—with Brigham Young blockaded from the east and starved for the goods of war—the value would be at least doubled, delivered in Zion. Add to half a million dollars the sum of three hundred mules at thirty dollars a head, plus the value of three hundred harnesses and fifty wagons, and you were getting into big business.

Teacum was wondering how many other trains, reportedly burned, had turned off to Brazos' post, their cargo destined not for Bridger but for Great Salt Lake. But, most of all, he wondered about the identity of the green-eyed conspirator in front of him.

"Good faith among the parties is pretty important in a deal like this," he fished. "And we don't even know your name."

"It is more important that names and identities be left behind us," the other parried. "I have asked none of your names, nor do I intend to. By the same token, I shall guard my own."

Teacum glanced involuntarily at Black Brazos, whose identity was well kenned indeed. The green-eyed man smiled again.

"Speaking of identities, it might be well to remark that Captain Brazos is not present tonight."

"Not present?" Teacum felt his eyebrows climb up into his hair.

"Oh, absolutely not. He is, I understand, down on the Burnt Fork south of Bridger this week and the next. Hunting deer to help relieve the hunger of troops at that unfortunate post. As a matter of fact, there is a certain officer attached to Colonel Alexander's staff—a very influential and respected officer, I might add—who will swear to that very thing. I mention it only to save you from being cited for perjury, in case you should feel moved to make statements to the contrary, at some future date."

Teacum was feeling very quiet, down inside. He was remembering other things this man had said tonight. He was putting two and two together, and getting a hundred.

"Would it be possible?" he asked softly, "that this same influential officer is here in my camp, with Brazos?"

Teacum thought the green eyes gleamed a little brighter. But the sharp smile did not waver.

"That is the question, isn't it?" the suave voice purred. "But since we have agreed not to discuss identities, I'm afraid you shall have to answer your own question. I'm afraid, too, that we've rather overstayed our visit. Have you reached a decision sir, on the—ah—disposition of your train?"

Teacum shook his head. He was all but certain now that he was dealing with a treasonous Army officer. The one way to make certain would be to join the conspiracy and turn over his train. Win the confidence of the traitors and learn their identities. But Colonel Johnston had closed this door, with his admonition that the train was not to be risked. Teacum's only alternative then was to keep his train intact, and keep the conspirators dangling. Stall and keep negotiations open, learning what he could.

"You'll have to give us a little time to think it over," he said aloud. "Even if I knew my own mind, I'd have to poll the men."

"Poll them now," the other urged. "We will wait."

Teacum knew that the teamsters were listening intently to all that was said. He knew they would vote to go to Great Tar Spring. He shook his head.

"Mutiny is serious business, mister," he said, speaking both to the conspirator and to his teamsters. "We'll have to talk it over. Come back tomorrow night. We'll tell you something then."

The green eyes were impatient and annoyed. "You may be burned out and afoot by tomorrow night. This Lot Smith, he's a sudden man."

"And we have a sudden treatment for sudden men," Teacum said, answering threats with threats. He looked around the circle of his men, singling out a lank, spade-bearded Tennessean, Barracks by name, who had been an Army sergeant in Mexico. The man was trustworthy, and popular with the men. His big rocky fists packed the kind of authority that civilians understood.

"Barracks," the soldier commanded, "break out additional guns and ammunition. Issue two rifles and two pistols and a hundred rounds to every man. All men in the company will mount guard tonight, and stand through until dawn. Take over!"

THE order, and the tone in which it was delivered, seemed to recall old associations out of the ex-sergeant's past. He saluted mechanically, and turned upon his fellows, addressing them in a voice that filled the night with authoritative sound. Men who had refused to take orders from Teacum a few minutes ago jumped when the Tennessean spoke. Teacum was comforted by the knowledge that he had found a capable adjutant.

He turned to find the green eyes watching him curiously. He saw he had impressed his visitor, all right—though not altogether in the way that he'd intended.

"Were you ever in the Army, mister?" the other asked. "You spoke like an officer, just then."

Teacum could have bitten his tongue off, for its indiscretion. But he showed the other none of his distress.

"And how does it happen," he countered, "that you are an authority on the speaking mannerisms of Army officers?"

"I have known a few such, in my time," the green-eyed man replied. "I didn't enjoy the acquaintance. But now, I think we had better ride."

And when they'd gathered their horses and had left the corral, Teacum stood at the edge of the enclosure, watching them out of sight in the dark. He began to wish now that he'd held the two, for he could no longer doubt that the green-eyed man was an officer out of uniform. But common sense told him that it would have been a mistake. If the unsavory pair were independent pirates, they wouldn't have sufficient strength to take his train by force. And if they were attached to the rebels' forces, he couldn't have held them, anyhow. If he'd tried, he would only have precipitated an attack by Smith's whole hard-riding troop. And, against such odds, he would never be able to hold out.

"Barracks," he said sharply, turning back to his camp, "we'd better get the mules inside the corral. Hurry it. We might not have much time!"

But, as it worked out, they had no time at all. His camp must have been under closer surveillance than he had suspected. For the words were scarcely out

of his mouth when a rifle somewhere in the dark cracked like a breaking stick. Then other sticks began to snap. One by one, at first. Then many sticks together. A herder's voice rang out, thin and shrewish as an irate woman's: "Hey, you blasted hinnies—whoa! . . . *Hey, men! Turn out! We are attacked!*"

Teacum was running, his concern for the mules, not the train. He was diving beneath a wagon, emerging in the rank-smelling swale that held the grazing mules. The ground was oozy underfoot, and he was colliding with men running back toward the corral. His mouth was open. It felt stiff with sound. But the words he heard came from other mouths. Barking words, highly keening. Shot through with ragged rifle fire.

"Yippee! Pour it on 'em! How you like it, mobocrats? Send 'em to hell, boys, crosslots!"

He heard a rising thunder of hoofs in the ground. Fire-shoots blossomed crazily in the dark. The air snarled savagely overhead. Then a different voice was shouting in his ear.

"Too late, boss. They got the mules. Better git back!"

He looked, and it was so. The mules were coming. All the mules in the world, he thought. They were still chained together on their picket lines. Picket stakes were dragging underfoot—swinging behind like devilish scythes. He had to race back for the corral to keep from being run down.

Then the mules were past. The night now was filled with horses. Horses with saddles and bridles and rifles, shooting into the air. Centaurs with beards and slouch hats. White teeth flashing.

One rider swung close to where Teacum stood. He had a half-formed impression of green mocking eyes above a Vandyke beard. He raised his pistol and fired. His bullet went wide.

Then the riders themselves had passed. Teacum found himself thinking that his visitors must have been Mormons, after all. There'd been so many riders in that cavalcade. He was impatient with the thought. It didn't matter. The picket lines hadn't held. He'd lost his mules. Without mules, he'd lost his train. That was what mattered.

The herders were coming in, looking dazed and sheepish. But that didn't matter, either. Nothing mattered beyond the fact that Ty Teacum had been out-talked and out-generaled at every turn, by a green-eyed man who held a trader's horses and talked like a mutinous Army man.

Wearily, he slumped against a wagon, trying to collect his thoughts. He jarred a big brass bell that hung by a leather strap from the brake lever. The muted clapper muttered, indistinctly. But, inside Teacum's head, it struck a resounding gong.

That bell was rung, morning, noon, and night, to summon the mules to their grain. Sound on a night like this would travel far. Those stampeding mules were ravenous . . .

WITH fingers of steel, he wrenched the bell down, freed the hampered clapper, and shook from it a raucous clatter of sound that must have brought the pickets up at faraway Bridger. Frantically, with all his strength and soul, he shook that heavy bell. Minutes dragged, bringing no results. But he didn't give up. His arms wearied and began to ache. Aching progressed into numbness. His arms seemed to be another's, doing things that had no meaning. His ears were bursting in the din.

Then a hand was on his shoulder. A voice was shouting above the wild clangor he had loosed upon the night.

"You done it, boss! You brung them back! They are comin' in!"

He saw them, then. Saw their eyes, glowing incandescent as they caught the light of the fire. Then the vague, irregular bobbing mass of them. Three hundred fire-eyed mules, coming in for corn! But he still did not dare silence the bell. Rather, he increased the sound, shouting to his teamsters above the fearsome clamor.

"Drag a wagon out of line! Let them into the corral!"

The order was obeyed, and an instant later the leaders were thundering past him, into the circle of wagons. His nostrils were filled with dust, and the smell of fresh nitrate which would never again offend him.

He thought, as the flood roared past

him, that he saw saddled, riderless horses among the mules. He thought his imagination was playing him tricks. Then, vaguely, through the dust, he saw one horse with a rider still upon its back. He realized then that the stampeding mules had fetched some of the enemy's horses back with them, and he added one wild whoop of triumph and delight to the pandemonium.

The lone rider, hearing his yell, fought desperately to check and turn his runaway mount. But the horse, swept along by the thundering tide, could not turn. Into the trap it went, carrying its frantic rider along. And Teacum yelled hoarsely again. He not only had recovered his stolen mules. He had taken a prisoner in the bargain!

But the rider had no intention of being taken. Once inside the corral, the horseman tried again to bring his mount to rein. Failing at last, and seeing perhaps that the teamsters were rolling the displaced wagon back into position, closing tight the trap, the rider leaped heedlessly to the ground. He landed on his feet, but squarely in the path of a running mule. When the mule had passed, the horseman lay huddled and quiet on the ground, not fifteen feet from where Teacum stood.

The string was now milling crazily inside the corral, still entangled in picket chains. Other mules were coming through the dust, heading straight for the trampled rider. And a prisoner ground to hash by a thousand hoofs did not fit the soldier's plans. In three long jumps, he reached the prone figure, and scooped it up in his arms. He was surprised at its lightness. He was grateful, too. For the mules were bearing down upon him, and he had to move nimbly himself.

A minute later, when the corral was sealed and the teamsters were breaking up the mad spiraling with corn and barley in the troughs, Teacum approached the fire, carrying his captive Mormon. A grin was frozen to his face at the sudden and unexpected turn of fortune's tables.

Then he'd halted at the fire, and the grin fell from his face, leaving his mouth round and open. The stocking cap had worked off his captive's head, loosing a cascade of golden hair that reached almost to the ground.

Teacum's Mormon prisoner was a woman. A beautiful woman, with a smudge of dirt and blood upon her face. And she was hurt.

CHAPTER IV

PLURAL WIFE

THEY heard no more of the guerrillas nor of Brazos and his partner that night, and dawn found the wagons rolling west in siege formation—two and sometimes three abreast—up the broad Sweetwater Valley. The walking teamsters carried pistols, with two loaded muskets strapped to their wagons within easy reach.

Teacum rode the van on the sorrel remount horse furnished him at Laramie, scouting the hills and the deep arroyos for sign of enemy cavalry. And though small mounted parties reconnoitered the train from time to time, the Mormonie captains seemed to have acquired added respect for the train and its company. None of the riders ventured within gun range.

Teacum's exhilaration at having recovered his mule string the night before had been dampened by the sight of the green-eyed man among the raiders. For it seemed to identify him positively with the Mormon partisans. And, having been seen participating in the raid, the man with the Vandyke beard would not be likely to keep his appointment for the coming night. Brazos, too, would be likely to avoid direct contact with the train, except over a loaded gun. So Teacum's private investigation of the pair seemed to have been terminated, without turning up the information he wanted.

But today, viewing the matter in the cold light of day, he was able to take a longer view of the affair. He had adequate proof now that the trader had sided actively with the rebels. And the arm of the military was long. Black Brazos would be apprehended, in good time. In the meantime, since his perfidy was known, his usefulness to the Mormons would be considerably curtailed.

As for the green-eyed man—time would clear up the mystery of him, also. It would be a simple matter, on arriving at Bridger, to determine whether there was an officer on the rolls which answered this man's description—an officer who had been absent from duty during late October. In the meantime, Teacum had recovered his mules, had taken a prisoner, and had captured several Mormonie horses as well. These, in much better flesh than his mules, were under harness today, helping to move freight to Bridger.

The thought persisted that Brazos and his companion, whether Mormons or pirates, would now be likely to use desperate means to keep him from reaching Bridger, to report their treasonous activity. But his devastating triumph over the enemy the night before had cheered and emboldened his teamsters, and Teacum now considered his prospects and his chances of reaching Bridger much improved. So, as the day wore on, it was not Brazos and his green-eyed associate who were uppermost in the soldier's mind. It was, instead, the pretty guerrilla prisoner his mules had brought him.

Ty Teacum had heard much of Mormon women. But he found it difficult to fit his captive to the pattern. She seemed scarcely more than a child, with none of the hardened masculinity that adversity and sweating labor brought to most frontier women at an early age. Yet he had found her dressed in the clothes of a man, riding a half-broken horse, in Lot Smith's hell-roaring cavalry. What did it mean?

The girl had been hurt. How badly, he did not know. He had examined her in the light of the fire, and had found no broken bones. Only a swollen gash at the base of her skull where the mule's hoof had struck. He was afraid of concussion, for the girl had not regained consciousness the night before. And she'd still shown no signs of sensibility when he'd broken camp that morning.

There had been no papers on her person. Nothing to tell who she might be or how she came to be riding with

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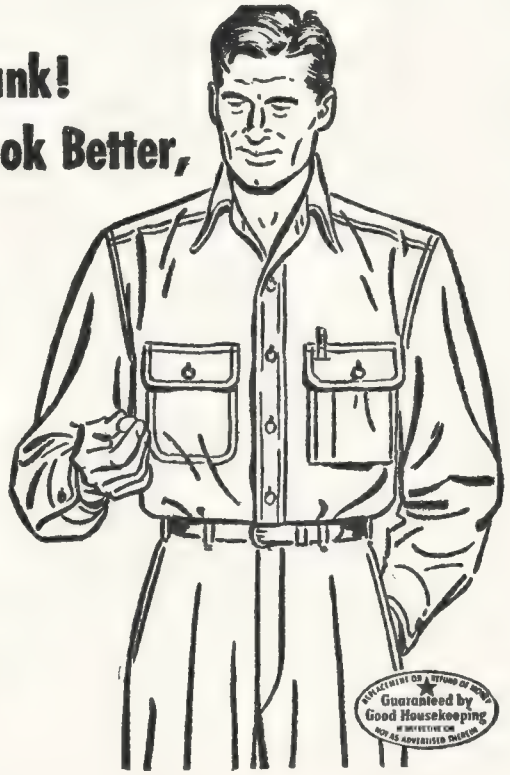

Smith's Cossacks. And since the nearest medical skill was at Bridger, two hundred miles away, Teacum had placed her on a mattress in one of the dry goods wagons, had cautioned the teamster against disturbing her, and had resolved to put her out of his mind.

But the resolve was one thing, its accomplishment another. She had lain in his arms, helpless as a sleeping babe, and her skin had been like silk to his touch. True, she was a prisoner of war, even though she was a girl, and wounded. If she did not recover consciousness at all, Teacum's personal problems and the entire camp routine would be much less complicated. But her face, when he'd washed it, had been hauntingly beautiful. And every time he looked into the sun, he saw her hair again, cascading to the ground in the firelight.

What a prize he had captured! And what a headache he had acquired, if she lived! Wait till the boys at Bent's heard of it. Ty Teacum riding off to the wars, capturing a wild Mormon girl. Right out of a bishop's harem, maybe!

He'd meant that last to laugh at. But, somehow, he did not laugh. He wondered why he hoped it wasn't so . . .

BY NOON, the weakened mules were failing. And since he did not mean to risk them outside the corral any more at night, he ordered the wagons corraled where the first grass was found. The mules were picketed out to graze the remainder of the daylight hours, under the guard of the entire crew, with lookouts posted on the distant buttes.

Teacum reckoned the distance covered that day as no more than six miles. But six miles were better than no miles. And he knew that unless he pampered the weakened string from here on, he would not make many six-mile hauls in the days to come.

Twice, in the course of the afternoon, he looked in on his injured captive. But the eyes were still closed, the posture unchanged. He had covered her warmly with blankets the night before. But now her face and limbs felt cold to his touch. He heated boulders in the mess fire, wrapped them in blankets, and placed them about her body.

Later, when the evening mess was over, he carried her food. But the eyes were still closed, and he began to fear that they would never open. That he would never even know their color . . .

Some time before sundown, the mules had cleaned the swale of grass, and he had them fetched into the corral, ironed to the wagons, and fed a bait of grain. Then, as the blood-red sun sank behind the mountains, he ordered the fires extinguished, the men divided into two watches of equal strength. One watch would stand until midnight, the other from midnight till dawn. For Teacum expected an attack tonight. An attack not upon his mules but upon the wagons themselves. And, if it came, he meant to resist.

It had not been an easy decision to make. He was convinced by now that neither the President nor the Army nor the Mormons themselves wanted a shooting war. He was likewise convinced that there would be no war, if the present stalemate could be continued until Buchanan and Brigham Young could devise face-saving measures which would enable them to withdraw from their respective extreme positions without seeming to retreat.

Thus far, in this so-called war, there had been liberal exchanges of threats and insults, much parading of strength on both sides. Government property had been destroyed and harmless volleys exchanged. But each faction was leaving it to the other to open real hostilities. And this was always a favorable sign.

But if Brazos and his associate were sufficiently determined to stop Teacum's train, if they attacked and if the train resisted, fifty men would be annihilated in the end by five hundred. And if fifty United States citizens and an Army lieutenant were slaughtered here on the Sweetwater River, the nation itself would demand war. The Army and the Mormon Church would have no voice in the matter, then.

It seemed a grave responsibility which fate had handed Ty Teacum. Fate and Albert Sidney Johnston. And as night closed in around his camp—an infinitesimal speck on a wilderness as vast as the sea—the lieutenant made his restless rounds of the guard posts, wrestling with

uncertainty and doubt. Wondering if his men would stand when the blow fell, and about the color of a pair of eyes. Wishing there would be a moon.

The night was absolutely quiet. For the first time since Independence Rock, the evening dark was untroubled by raucous shouts and songs. But that circumstance in itself was sufficient warning to a frontier soldier. He began to wish that the attack would come, and put an end to uncertainty.

It was coming on for midnight and Teacum was beginning to think there would be no attack after all when one of the guards summoned him in an excited whisper. Teacum reached the post quickly, and peered in the direction pointed. He saw the vague outline of a bush, some fifty yards out.

"Well?"

"That clump o' brush out there!" the teamster whispered excitedly. "It wasn't there, five minutes ago!"

The weariness left Teacum like a burden dropped. This was like Comanche country! He searched the landscape for other similar bushes, but could see no others.

"Alert the guards, all around the circle," he told the man whose post it was. "Then wake the sleepers. But do it quiet. If this is going to be a surprise, we want it in our favor."

The teamster departed on quiet feet. Teacum cocked his pistol, his eyes on the clump of brush. But he wanted the camp alerted before he challenged. However, the guard had scarcely departed when a voice called out boldly from the night.

"Halloo—the train! Anybody awake?"

THE shout brought a chorus of startled grunts from the unwarned guards, a rattle of guns being readied. But these sounds scarcely registered with Teacum. The voice he'd heard continued to reverberate inside his head. It was a voice he knew. It was the green-eyed man, back to continue negotiations for the surrender of the train. Then he shook his head. It could not be. No man would have such effrontery. Not after what had happened last night. Not after Teacum had shot at him.

Elder Boggs, Latter-day Saint

"The train's awake, mister," he called when he had found his own voice. "Name yourself and your business, and do it quick. There are twenty guns on you!"

"I am Elder Boggs of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," the voice stated piously. "I wish to talk to you. Do you guarantee me safe conduct out of your camp if I come in?"

Teacum ground his teeth. So the man was a Mormon, after all. That, or he was lying. Whichever, he had the iron-plated gall to come skulking around Teacum's camp, talking of safe conduct, after he'd almost succeeded in stalling the wagon train in the desert the night before!

"I guarantee you safe conduct—into hell, if this is another trick!" Teacum snapped. "Come in, if you want. But come with your hands up. Or stay out there, if you prefer, and I'll give my teamsters some target practice."

The other was silent a time. Then he sighed. "All right. I'm coming in. But I trust you."

The brush clump toppled, and the form of a man materialized. His hands were up, and he approached the wagons slowly.

Teacum met him at the outer edge of the enclosure, and satisfied his incredulous eyes. He hadn't fully believed, until that moment. But it was his friend of the green eyes, all right. Chipper and arrogant as ever.

Teacum removed a knife and pistol from his belt, searched him quickly for any other hidden weapons, then stepped back.

"This is a pleasant surprise, Elder," he said. "I really didn't expect you back. I'm only sorry you didn't bring Black Brazos."

"Elder Brazos sends his regards," the other said blandly. "He is otherwise occupied tonight."

Teacum started. "Did you say *Elder* Brazos?"

The Mormon nodded. "Captain Brazos has joined the Church. He is a leading force among our patriots."

The suave voice held a ring of triumph, and Teacum could see why. If what the man reported proved to be true, then Brazos had neatly dodged the charges of treason the Army would bring against him. His joining the church would confer upon him the status of a lawful belligerent—if the Mormon position could be defined as such. At least, Brazos could not be indicted for treason unless all other Mormons opposing the Army were similarly indicted. And, in such matters, there is usually safety in numbers.

"*Elder* Brazos, is it?" Teacum said softly, savoring the grotesquery. "Well, I don't think I'd want him to deacon me! And now, Elder Boggs, if you're here to repeat the trick that back-fired on you last night, you won't get off so easy this time, I can assure you. I never miss a man twice!"

The other shook his head. "You bested us, decisively, last night. We are satisfied. Your train has won the right to proceed unmolested, mister!"

"Kind of you," Teacum muttered. "Then I suppose you came for my answer to your little proposition?"

The Mormon grunted a negative. "We interpreted your action last night as a most definite reply to our overtures. We have now abandoned the project. Rather, mister, I am here to inquire after my wife."

Teacum stiffened, as if he had been struck. His jaw dropped, and he was powerless to pull it up. But, after a while, he found he could.

"Your *wife?*" he repeated, when he could speak. "*Your* wife?"

Unable to decide, in his mentally unbuttoned state, which word deserved the emphasis, he ended by emphasizing both impartially. Somehow he had not expected this.

Somehow, it was important, though he had no clear idea just why.

"My wife," the Mormon affirmed. "The girl your mules fetched in last night, along with several of our horses. I have been very concerned. She is my youngest wife—my favorite. I hope nothing has happened to her."

My youngest wife! My favorite—

A kind of nausea was spreading inside Ty Teacum. Nausea which was numb at the edges, such as sometimes follows a hard blow in the stomach. A vomitous feeling he didn't understand.

Ty Teacum had long been familiar with the Mormon doctrine of plural marriage. Heretofore, he had regarded the business more as a curiosity than as an abomination. As an anachronism which excited his interest and speculation, but which had never struck him as personally offensive.

But it struck him now—a stunning blow. For no justifiable reason, it seemed very personal indeed. The girl was scarcely more than a child!

His face felt wooden and hot, and he was thankful it was dark. As it was, his reaction had not passed unnoticed by the Mormon.

"You seem distressed, sir," the other said solicitously. "By God, if you've mistreated her—"

Teacum, struggling to free his wits from the black disgust which had enveloped them, did not hear the threat. He was busy with a comprehension. The man of many faces, the erudite gentleman who held a trader's horse and spoke like a rebellious soldier, now emerged as a Mormon dignitary—a full-blown saintly polygamist!

NOW that he was thinking rationally again, he examined the handsome features more critically, in the starlight. The man hadn't the look of a rustic backwoods biblical zealot, any more than he had the look of an Indian trader's man Friday.

The uneasy thought would not down

that his suavity and polish belonged to the drawing room—or the officer's club. But then he remembered that one phenomenon of the Mormon Church was its unexplained attraction of persons from high economic and social planes. Scholars and merchants and gifted politicians were among its converts, as well as persons of no means or education.

Perhaps he stared at the face too long, too intently. At any rate, the features suddenly blurred before his eyes. In the dim light, the face now seemed to have no features at all—the man of many faces to have no face. Teacum had the feeling that he was watching a glow of foxfire or a desert mirage. A thing which was not.

Indeed, he would not have been greatly surprised if he had put out a hand and found nothing where the man was standing before him.

Then he roused himself. He was creating mystery where mystery did not exist. Either the man was telling the truth or he was lying. Whichever, the man was now in his hands, and the truth could be learned.

"Why are you stalling?" he heard the other saying. "I know my wife is in your train. I demand a chance to see her and talk with her!"

"You demand!" Teacum laughed. But it was a rattling sound. "I'm afraid you have come to a poor place to make demands, Elder!"

"You mean that you refuse me permission to see my wife?" the Mormon asked archly.

"I mean," Teacum said coldly, "that I am engaged in the business of making war, as I believe you are, Elder. Your wife was captured while participating in a hostile act against this wagon train—which, I'll remind you, is under commission of the nation's armed forces. The girl is a prisoner of war, as you are yourself. It is not the practice to permit communication between prisoners before they have been questioned."

The Mormon, more calm than Ty Teacum, made a deprecatory sound. "My wife was engaged in no hostile act, sir. She was with a handcart company of converts, which is stalled up ahead in South Pass. She was out looking for me, last night. In the dark, she became involved with your stampeding mules. Surely, searching for one's husband does not constitute an act of hostility against the government—even as such things are now construed!"

Teacum had to admit that the story was plausible. He guessed that it was even true. But the other's smug and patronizing manner reacted upon his temper like vinegar on salt.

"If the girl is your wife," he de-

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manded, "what is she doing in a convert company?"

The other smiled, and the smile held much of self-esteem. "I converted her, and married her, only a short time ago. We both were traveling to Deseret with the company in question. I being able-bodied and familiar with the country, was conscripted for service against you mobocrats. But really, mister—the smile became a leer—"you show unseeming interest in another's wife! If you don't believe me, why not ask her?"

"I intend to ask her a lot of things," Teacum growled, "as soon as she is able to talk. Perhaps I should tell you, Elder. Your wife was hurt last night. Trampled by a mule."

"Trampled?" The thin brows arched. But his interest seemed more polite than really concerned. "Then, am I to understand you mean to keep her here, and let her die?"

"You are to understand a lot of things which have been getting past you, Elder!" Teacum snapped, angered that the man had put him in an indefensible position. "You came into my camp under false pretenses last night, and I'm not sure you haven't done the same thing again. I won't hang you, as I ought. But I'll turn you over to men who may!"

The other shrugged. "May I see my wife?" he persisted.

Teacum's first impulse was to refuse. But since he could devise no possible justification for such pettiness, either personal or official, he gave reluctant consent.

"She is in that wagon yonder. But I doubt that you can do more for her than has been done. She has not recovered consciousness. And take a fair warning. Any tricks, from you or from others outside the corral, and you will be shot. The wagon is under guard."

CHAPTER V

SAINTS AND SINNERS

THE Mormon left him, muttering, and Teacum glowered after him, wondering why everything about the man should bring his hackles up and prompt him to a meanness of thought and action which was not natural to him. He had been conscious of that feeling, that fundamental animosity, from the first instant their eyes had met earlier, across the campfire. If the feeling had been made any more intense by the knowledge that the girl he'd captured was the man's polygamous wife, he was not prepared to admit it. Rather, that knowledge seemed merely affirm that antagonism, not to heighten or explain it. If he had encountered Elder Boggs in a St. Louis drawing room or alone on an uninhabited ocean island, that same instant enmity would have leaped between them, like a drawn knife. Or so he believed, just then.

Sourly, he watched the man disappear into the wagon. Vindictively he assumed the role of guard, hoping that his prisoner would attempt to escape, giving him excuse to shoot.

But the Mormon made no such attempt. And Teacum's feeling toward him did not improve when he heard the sound of whispering from within the hooded wagon. For the sound informed him he had been royally duped. The girl, he guessed, had been conscious all along. She had feigned insensibility, and thus had avoided questioning. Doubtless, she had been plotting to escape.

He was prompted to enter the wagon at the moment, and question the pair together. But this impulse gave way to another, more cunning. He might learn more if they did not know he was listening. But, when he moved silently along the wagon and put his ear to the canvas, the whispering ceased abruptly. When it was resumed, it was so hushed he could barely hear the sibilant, wordless hissing. But he did hear a chuckle and a low musical laugh, and he knew he had been discovered, eavesdropping.

His face flushed with shame and anger, and his breath seemed to scorch his lungs. Once again, he had been put in bad light by his glib and agile enemy. His hatred of the Mormon deepened abysmally, and he left the wagon, swearing softly.

Nor was his aversion for the man appeased any when he appeared at last, chuckling at some secret amusement and good humor.

"My apologies, Elder," he snapped.

"I understand that I was mistaken about your wife's condition."

"I understand that you understand," the other smirked, glancing at the spot where Teacum had listened. The soldier clenched his fists to keep them at his sides.

"Then understand another thing, Saint," he breathed. "Understand that I am holding you and your wife both prisoner, for military authorities at Bridger. Understand that I have given orders that if either or both of you try to escape, you are to be shot!"

Teacum was thinking that if the man were a deserter from the Army, he would suffer a change of countenance at the threat to turn him over to military police. But the other merely shrugged.

"Since my wife is not able to travel, and since I should hesitate to abandon her to your kind attentions, mister, I shall accept your invitation and remain in the train—for the present."

"Considerate of you," Teacum said with irony. "And damned sensible. Any other favors you feel like doing me?"

"One other," the Mormon said. "In case you should encounter unexpected difficulties on the trail, I shall remain authorized and prepared to accept the surrender of this train and its lading, in the name of Brigham Young—the only rightful and lawful governor of Utah Territory."

"It will be a comfort to know," Teacum breathed, wondering how much more he could take. "Meantime, I am authorized and prepared to tell you to go to hell!"

The Mormon clucked, reprovingly. "You may force our hand to sterner measures."

"Well, you force mine!" the soldier grated. All the damned-up animosity and distrust, all the loathing and repugnance and disgust that this man stirred in him, welled up in protest against the maddening smug piety. Anger, freed at last, bathed him in hot waves, prickling his skin from his scalp to his toes.

"Barracks!' he shouted. "Break out the irons for our guest. Cuffs and leg irons, in case he gets fiddle-footed. I should hate to be deprived of his company before reaching Bridger."

The Mormon, to his surprise, submitted to the irons without protest—hands chained together in front of him by steel wristlets, a fifty-pound ball on one leg. Teacum oversaw the shackling, taking no pleasure in it. When it was done, the Tennessean spoke brusquely.

"Where we put 'im? In that wagon, with his missis?"

Teacum turned aside, and did not reply immediately. Once again, his impulse was to deprive the Mormon of his wife's society. But, once again, he could not justify the inclination, even to himself.

"Where the hell else would you lodge him?" he demanded savagely. But, once again, he was glad it was dark and his face hidden from the others' sight. . . .

THERE was no further disturbance that night, and at dawn the train resumed its endless, dusty journey. The day wore on, and Teacum—riding the van once more—saw no sign whatsoever of the Mormon hostiles. But this fact in itself impressed him as ominous. It was not to be believed that Black Brazos would simply write his partner off, without even sending a white flag to inquire of his fate.

There were other unfavorable portents, also. The sky was overcast with leaden gray. The howling east wind—the ogre of the wilderness—shoved and shrilled and shrieked like a demon. Blowing the fire-blackened dust in blinding clouds. Knifing through Teacum's greatcoat and corduroy trousers, chilling the marrow in his bones.

Somewhere ahead was South Pass, the barren "thoroughfare of wind and storm." He knew that if winter overtook him in that vast treeless trough, his weakened mules would never get him through, even if he escaped the Mormons. Well, if it came to it, he would burn his wagons, to keep the lading from falling to the enemy, and fight his way to Bridger on foot.

As he rode, he thought endlessly of the Mormon and his wife, back in the warmth of the improvised ambulance. He still could not consider the green-eyed man without a heating of his blood. But, though he wanted more than ever now to believe the man was an Army

deserter, he found the opinion increasingly difficult to sustain.

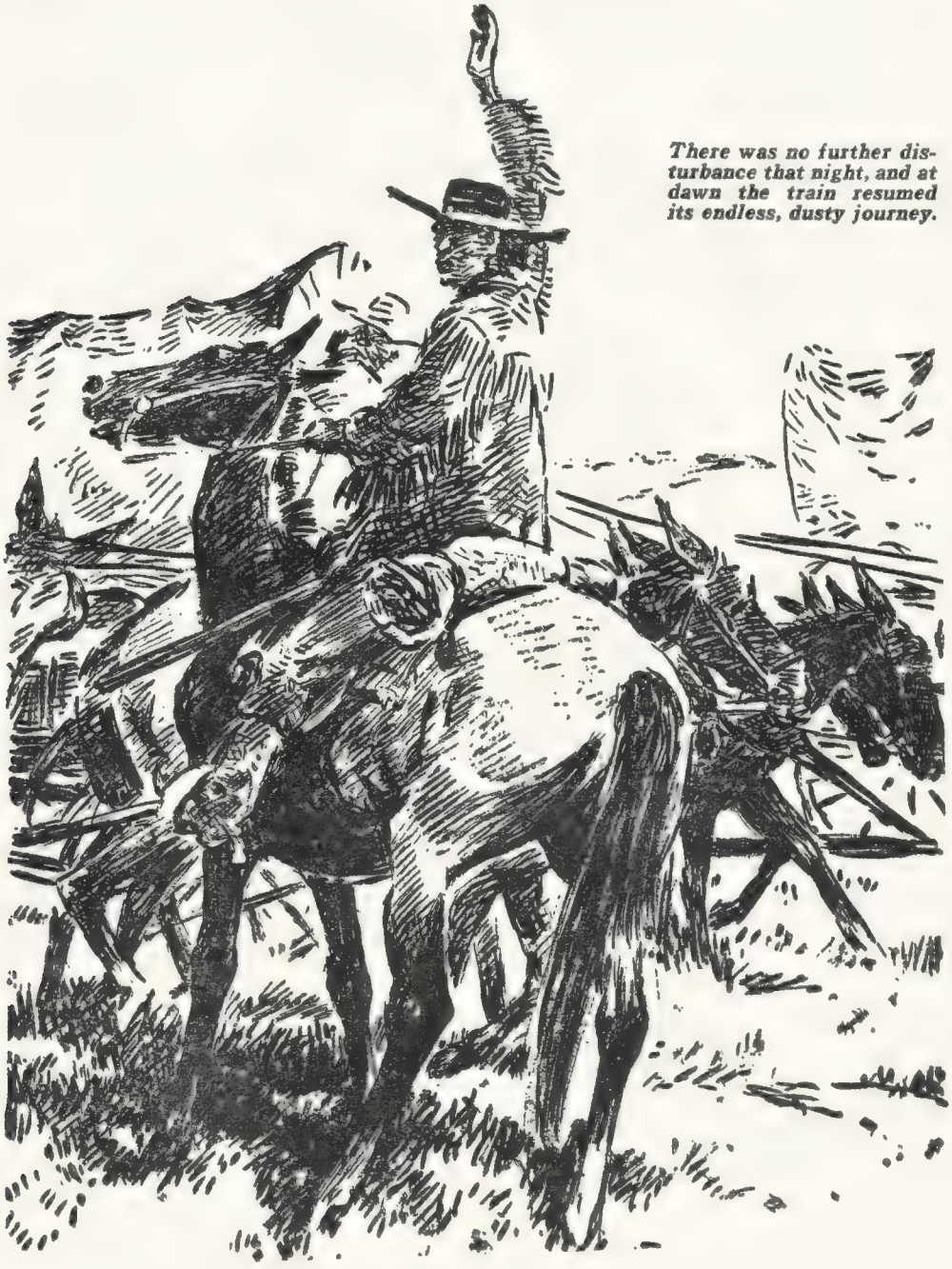
In the first place, a man who had come west with the expedition would not have had time to embrace the faith and rise to the station of elder and polygamist. In the second place, an Army deserter would not be likely to risk capture and shooting, merely to enjoy the society of his wife. Not even of his youngest and favorite wife!

And yet, wishful thinking or otherwise, the conviction would not leave him that the green-eyed man was other than he seemed. The man had so many faces! Teacum would scarcely be surprised to learn next that he was Lot Smith himself in disguise. And why had the man guarded his identity so jealously on his first visit to the wagon camp, whereas on his second call he had divulged it so readily? Why had he spoken so blandly

of a certain influential officer at Bridger, if he were not connected with the Army?

The girl captive might have been able to have shed light on the mystery, if Teacum had got to her ahead of the Mormon. But the girl's feigned insensibility had foiled him there. And by now, the Mormon—if he were playing a game—would have her too well briefed in her role to give out any information.

This thought gave birth to another suspicion, more disturbing than any of the others. Suppose the whole thing was a conspiracy. Suppose the girl had



There was no further disturbance that night, and at dawn the train resumed its endless, dusty journey.

known her part before she was captured. Suppose that, on finding that Teacum would not surrender the train, and seeing his attempts to stampede the mules defeated, the Mormon had *sent* the girl into his camp, to give him an excuse to follow her, on seemingly innocent business. Suppose there were traitors in Teacum's own company. After all, he knew nothing whatsoever about the men in his crew. They could all be Mormons, and he wouldn't know it.

It was all so logical that he wondered why he hadn't thought of it before. In his heart, he wasn't prepared to believe it, because it left him no ground at all for hope. Yet, before sundown, he saw the suspicion confirmed.

It was coming on for midafternoon, when the sun broke through the clouds. Teacum had found no grass, and had reconciled himself to the knowledge that his mules would eat corn alone that night. He was scouting for a campsite, half a mile in front of the train, when his eye was taken by a series of curious flashes from the top of a wooded ridge to the north. He knew there would be no water up so high, to reflect the sun's rays. And once more he was reminded of Comanche country. Someone was signalling the train with a mirror.

He circled the wagons and saw that answering flashes were being reflected from the third vehicle in the near file—the wagon which contained the prisoners. He knew then that the worst of his fears were true. There might be no traitors in his company. But the Mormon Boggs was in touch with his compatriots in the hills. Signalling an attack, perhaps.

Wheeling his horse, Teacum spurred toward the train. No enemy had materialized by the time he arrived. But he started the wagons to circling where he found them, personally directing the formation of the circle. The near front wheel of each vehicle was brought up hub-to-hub with the off rear wheel of the wagon ahead, leaving no space between.

"This all for today?" Barracks asked, eyeing him with speculation.

"This is camp," Teacum snapped. "Water your teams, then iron 'em to the wagons inside, and feed corn. When that's done, put every man to digging a rifle pit in front of his wagon."

The Tennessean whistled. "You must be thinkin' we ketch it tonight!"

"I'm thinkin'," Teacum said bleakly, "that maybe we ketch it before tonight!"

Then he strode to the ambulance and summoned the Mormon. When the man stood before him, ironed and shivering in the wind, he wasted no words.

"I'll take that mirror now, Elder."

"Mirror?" The green eyes looked innocent.

Teacum searched him without saying more. He found no mirror and nothing else of value. The green eyes enjoyed his defeat.

"It's all right," he growled. "I'll find it. Meantime, you can start earning your keep. Barracks, get this man a pick. It's to his advantage that the camp is defended. If we are attacked, he'll be the first to die!"

Barracks looked at the prisoner, and Teacum thought that something passed between them. The Mormon held up his chains.

"I can't work in these."

"You'd better be learning," Teacum said. "You'll be working in chains a good many years—if you're not shot."

HE left the prisoner, digging half-heartedly, and climbed inside the wagon. The girl was asleep, or feigning sleep. Feigning, more likely, Teacum thought. But a slant of sun fell on the yellow hair, and once more Teacum thought of fine-spun gold, rarer than diamonds and more remote—to him. The face was the face of a sleeping child, more beautiful even than he remembered it. Then he called himself the fool he was, and began his search. But a part of his mind went on speculating, incorrigibly, on what he would see if the closed eyes opened.

The mirror was in none of the obvious places. He turned back the blankets. It was not in sight. Bending low, he slid his hand under the pillow. As he did so, the girl started up with a frightened cry.

For a breathless instant, their faces were inches apart, and neither moved. Teacum was engrossed in the discovery that the eyes were as blue as the prairie sky. The information could scarcely be regarded as vital to his reports. But it did seem important at the moment. Also

the fact that the eyes were bright with sleep.

The girl *had* been asleep. He *had* frightened her.

He realized that, after a day's ride in the black fire dust, he must not have presented a reassuring appearance. He smiled, experimentally. But his efforts were disastrous. Just when she should have been assured that he intended her no harm, the kissable mouth opened and began to scream.

For an instant, Teacum was frozen into helplessness. But the screaming showed no promise of abating, and finally—perhaps prompted by a tainted conscience—the appalling thought came to him: What must her husband and the teamsters be thinking? Roughly, more roughly than he intended, he clapped his hand over her mouth. Her teeth bit his palm, and he jerked the hand away. The screaming went on louder than before.

Angrily now, Teacum protected his hand with a corner of the blanket and stifled the sound more effectively. The girl struggled against him a moment. Then his superior strength won out, and she lay quite still, her eyes wide and apprehensive.

"You won't be harmed in my camp, Mrs. Boggs," he told her then, his tone satisfactorily cold. "Not unless you continue to abuse the privileges and freedom that is granted you. Now be a good girl and stop signalling to your friends, and see that your husband stops as well. Or I'll put you in irons, too."

The blue eyes seemed not to understand. But, fortunately, Teacum had spied the mirror which her struggles had brought out from beneath the pillow. Fortunately, because he felt half like a brute, half like a fool, and wanted to be gone. Fortunately, too, because he would not have left the wagon without it. And it seemed inadvisable to prolong his stay, lest the screams be misunderstood. So, having found what he wanted and delivered his warning, he was glad to take the mirror and retreat.

His feet had barely touched the ground outside the hooded vehicle when a choked voice burst upon his ears:

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"Molest my wife would you—you red-handed Puke!"

Whirling, he saw the Mormon elder coming at him, a heavy digging pick upraised in his hands. The handsome face was a study in outraged anger and in cunning that belied the passion. The pick was within striking distance of Teacum's head, and even as he spoke, the Mormon drove the point of it downward.

There was no time to jump back. No time to reach for the pistol in his belt. Still turning to face his assailant, Teacum threw up his hands to ward off the blow.

His hands caught hold of the hickory handle, just below the pick's iron head, and stopped the driving point inches from his temple. But the weight of the blow seemed to tear his arms out of his shoulders, and knocked him backward to the ground.

For a second or two, he wrestled the Mormon mightily for possession of the weapon. Then a boot found his head, and though he felt no pain, an odd kind of paralysis gripped his muscles and bones, holding them helpless. The pick was torn from his hands.

To Teacum's shocked senses, time and motion seemed weirdly knocked out of mesh.

The pick seemed to go up infinitely slow. Once poised, it seemed to hang endlessly in the air above him, instead of striking at once, as it ought.

Throughout that unreal, borrowed moment—throughout the crack in time, wherein the world and its frantic activity was frozen on the slide of a magic lantern—Teacum stared upward, fully, into

Teacum hurled the pick and leaped after it. . . . He didn't hear the gun explode, but he saw the flash as it burst inside his head.

the green eyes. And never had he found the man of the many faces a more undecipherable contradiction.

The handsome face was still twisted with fury—frozen in fury, like the face of a villain on a stage show bill. But the eyes were not the eyes of a jealous madman, about to commit murder in an instant of blind rage. The green eyes were cold and calculating. Eyes of a criminal killer, contemplating a victim. Objective and merciless and bright with triumph.

Then thought was freed to race wildly, like stampeding mules. Thought which flashed a nullifying comprehension. This was the Mormon's final triumph over him. This was why the girl had been sent into his camp, and why her husband had followed, to be taken prisoner. The girl's screams—the spring of the trap. He'd been taken in, as had his teamsters. Loyal or not, they'd not deny a man, a prisoner even, the right to protect the honor of his wife. That was why none intervened. It was the law of the land. Woman trouble was settled man to man. . .

The illusion passed. Time and motion meshed again. The twisted face shouted words that Teacum did not hear. The upraised pick flashed down.

Teacum, with an effort that bulged his eyes in their sockets, burst out of the nightmare paralysis. He jerked his head sideways. The pick's iron point grazed his skull and buried itself a foot in the ground, beside his ear.

Teacum's hands found the hickory handle again, clamping down in a grip that death would not have broken. His muscles were flexed for another struggle for possession of the fearful weapon. But the Mormon was no longer there. The pick was his.

When Teacum looked around, tearing the iron crescent from the ground, he saw the Mormon straightening from the earth some six feet away. The Mormon had a pistol, and a glance told Teacum the pistol was his own. The Mormon was pointing the pistol, and Teacum knew of a certainty that it was loaded and capped.

Teacum hurled the pick, and leaped after it, almost in one motion. He collided with a wall.

He didn't hear the gun explode. But he saw the flash, or seemed to, just as it burst into a blinding kaleidoscope inside his head. And, in the space of a single heartbeat, between the sickening jar and the blacking out, he knew the unthinkable had happened. He had been shot in the head. He had been killed. Killed, the world would hear, for making improper advances to a Mormon polygamist's wife. His own teamsters would verify the fact. What a glorious end for a soldier.

A soldier whom Colonel Johnston had picked from the field to perform a difficult mission!

He staggered forward. One step. Two. The world was a whirling chaos, shot through with red and black. Yet, through the crazy quilt, his eyes saw three things—with a brilliant three-dimensional clarity.

The Mormon elder, watching him with smoking gun, his face queer with triumph.

The startled, horror-struck features of the Mormon's beautiful wife—the bait of the Mormon's trap—staring at him through the opening in the wagon's canvas hood.

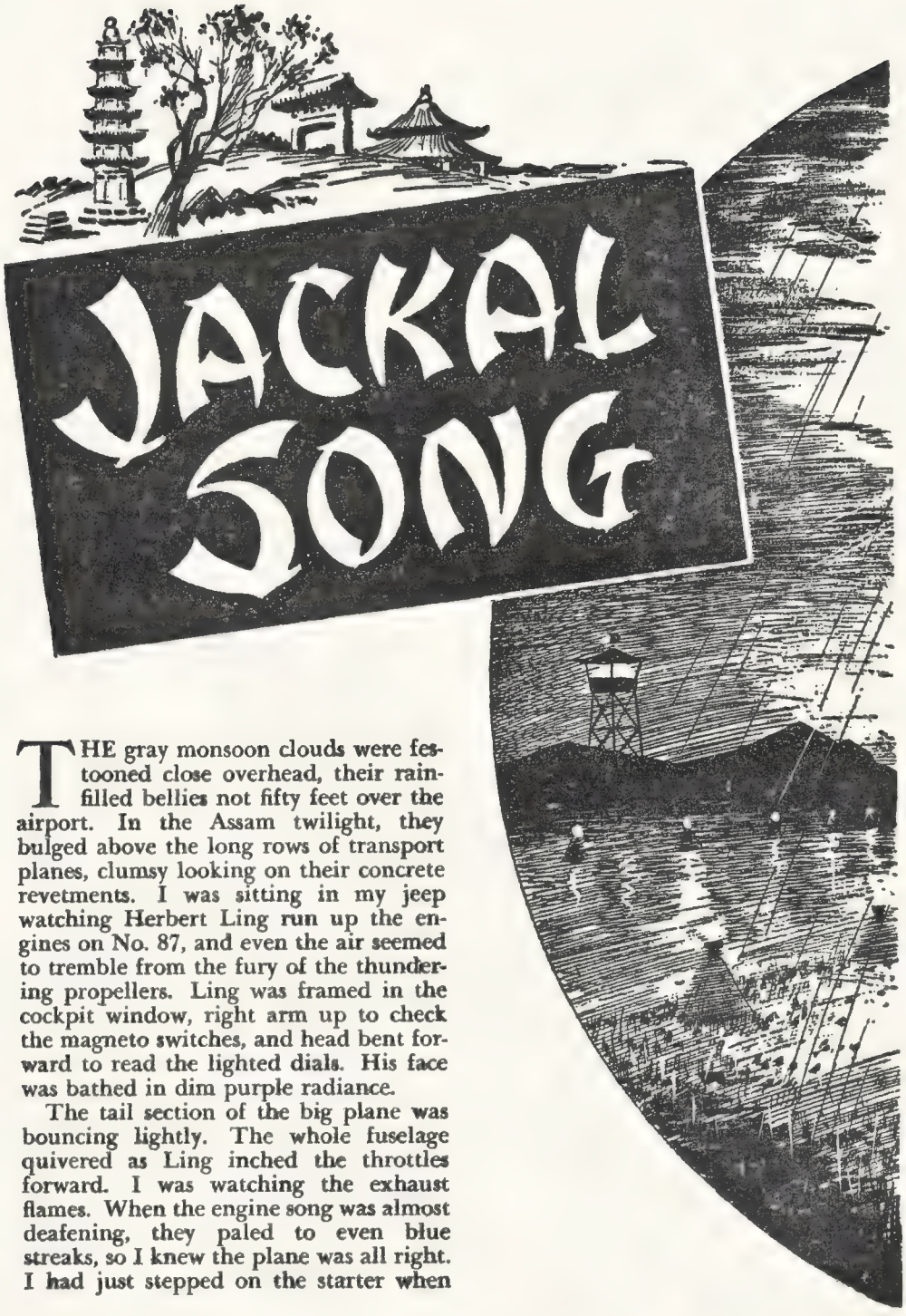
The teamsters, rooted to the ground and staring, stunned at the outcome of the fight from which they had remained aloof.

And, though this must have been a product of his own shocked fancy, he saw a troop of bearded, nondescript cavalry, riding up over the top of the rise beyond the meadow. At their head rode the traitor-trader, black-bearded Captain Brazos.

Real or not, the latter sight brought home to Teacum the full magnitude of his failure—the completeness of his enemy's victory over him. For, whether the raiders came now or tomorrow, his teamsters would not try to hold out. Not without a leader. And whether they sold out or were taken prisoner, the end remained the same. The train was lost, and Black Brazos' treachery would never be known to those who would punish it. Boggs' true identity likewise would remain a secret.

It was hard to die, thinking such thoughts. . . .

(End of Part I)



THE gray monsoon clouds were festooned close overhead, their rain-filled bellies not fifty feet over the airport. In the Assam twilight, they bulged above the long rows of transport planes, clumsy looking on their concrete revetments. I was sitting in my jeep watching Herbert Ling run up the engines on No. 87, and even the air seemed to tremble from the fury of the thundering propellers. Ling was framed in the cockpit window, right arm up to check the magneto switches, and head bent forward to read the lighted dials. His face was bathed in dim purple radiance.

The tail section of the big plane was bouncing lightly. The whole fuselage quivered as Ling inched the throttles forward. I was watching the exhaust flames. When the engine song was almost deafening, they paled to even blue streaks, so I knew the plane was all right. I had just stepped on the starter when

By JAMES ATLEE PHILLIPS

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MONROE EISENBERG

A tremendous explosion ruptured the sky at the north end of the field.

a command car wheeled up beside me. Mr. Wu, one of the Chinese operations clerks, jumped out of it and ran toward me.

"Captain Schmidt wish to see you," the little fat boy called out. He was holding onto his hat and shouting against the roar of the plane's engines. When I nodded, he turned and went back to the command car.

As I drove through the Panitola tea gardens, I wondered what the burrah sahib wanted now. Schmidt was division head of the China Airlines, and my immediate boss. I had others in Calcutta and Chungking, but he was the chief on Indian flight operations. My jeep bounced through the cool bamboo groves and past the hedge-high tea bushes. The natives were filtering homeward with their woven baskets balanced on their heads. Somewhere, out in the gathering dusk, the jackals began to wail, and the thin screaming sound of it made me curse under my breath.

Three years of sending planes across the Hump of China had made me well acquainted with death, since we lost what amounted to our entire fleet every ten months. The perilous routes insured that, and it was a stock gag on the China Line that, while we didn't have all the comforts of TWA, we went to a lot more funerals. As operations officer, I scheduled and briefed the boys, and I was used to eating breakfast with one set of pilots, and then never seeing them again. The war had stopped, but the weather hadn't, so we kept losing crews and planes. All through those three years, I had somehow come to associate the cry of the jackals, that was like a feminine scream of pain, with imminent death.

THE gaunt animals slipped across the road in front of me as I drove along. They were flitting gray wraiths, and their eyes shone like yellow slits. You could smell them, a musky odor that scavenging animals have. In upper India you soon get used to jackals—for they are everywhere, like death. Over the hum of the jeep, I could hear the throbbing of a plane plunging through the monsoon weather. I knew that would be Jimmy Scott back from Kunming. As I turned into the driveway leading to Schmidt's bungalow, I heard the plane letting down over the station.

Suklo, the head bearer, came to the door and salaamed gravely. His dark head was encased in a scarlet Benares pugri, and the brass medallion with the fluted Chinese wings sparkled as he bent low. I gave him my battered flight cap and went down the hall to the living room. Schmidt was sitting in his big leather chair staring into the fire. He didn't even look up. Just waved me toward a chair and told Suklo to bring me a drink. I sat down and tried to hunch the fatigue out of my shoulders.

"Still lousy out there?" the big man asked, turning his cropped head.

"Fifty foot ceiling. May improve, but we can send them into Jorhat. All right over there."

He grunted, and his stubby fingers drummed on the arms of the chair. The fire was pleasant, and the big radio cabinet in the corner was murmuring something about Tokyo. The announcer was typically BBC, clipped and polished. Schmidt stood up suddenly, walked over and flipped the radio switch off. He was a barrel-bodied man with short legs and a weathered face.

"Nine more pilots quit today," he said, staring at me. The crew cut made him look like a retired wrestler.

"I know." Suklo came in noiselessly and handed me a drink. "It's the end of the war. The boys want to go home."

"At these prices?" Schmidt shook his head. "They're scared to death. That's what's wrong."

He was staring into the bed of glowing coals. I knew he was right, so we didn't have much to talk about. We sat there in silence, and the drink began to flood warmth through my belly. Once he asked me if that had been Scott coming in, and I said yes. The jackals were moving in around the big bungalow; they came seeping out of the tea gardens like shadows, and their howling got closer and closer.

"Yesterday it was Scoville," said Schmidt angrily. "Took off and exploded before he even throttled back. Before him, Matthew, Gracey, Loh, Wright, and Johnson. All in three weeks. . ."

"Could have been mechanical," I said

carefully. I was turning the dark green tumbler in my hands.

"Sure." Schmidt was ironic. "So somebody cleaned out Scoville's locker and his bureau yesterday. Between the time he left the bungalow and the time he took off. Somebody who knew he was going to have a mechanical failure."

The dull fatigue made my face sag like a slipping mask. It was not that I hadn't expected this session, but that I had. I had known for two weeks.

"Six planes in three weeks in good weather." Schmidt was harsh about it. "Even for us, that's rough. We can't stand it. You got any ideas?"

I looked down into the green glass thoughtfully. "With three hundred people, mechs and radio men and refueling crews and loading crews, business department personnel, flight crews and passengers? All of them swarming over the airport and the planes? That makes it a lead pipe cinch, doesn't it?"

"I know." Schmidt was grinning, but not pleasantly. "Not easy, but we have got to find out soon, or we won't have an airline left."

"O.K." I shook my head. "I'll try some more."

"Trying's not good enough. You find out before next Friday, or I'll close it down and we'll let the CID have a crack at it." He stood there swinging his arms, as if in impotent fury, and I got up. Suklo was standing in the doorway, holding my cap, so I knew the interview was formally closed. I took my hat and went out. Schmidt had lived in the east for seventeen years, and he had the manners of a mandarin or a high Limey colonial officer. Efficient but abrupt. One of the things he did not have was politeness.

THE overcast was still down on the deck. I glanced up at it, and then spun the jeep around. There was another plane overhead, and I knew that would be Shepherd. So I stomped the accelerator, trying to beat him to the airport. The jackal song was faint and derisive along the dark jungle road.

Shep must have been better than 15,000 feet when he banged over the station because I beat him to the field and had time to spare. Nobody was in the office

In upper India you soon get used to jackals—for they are everywhere, like death.

but Mr. Wu. He was chalking the latest weather reports on the slate board, and I went over to check the flight sheets. The little Chinese finished his reports and came over to stand before me.

"Yes, Mr. Wu?" I said it without looking up.

"Shelves!" he barked explosively. I looked up. The little man always wore a Stillwell-type campaign hat and a neat black suit. The brim of the hat was cut away next to the crown except for a visor effect across his brow. It was a startling hat, and made him look like a militant piglet.

"What about the shelves?"

"For stockroom, pliss." Wu said everything loudly and with confidence.

I slapped at one leg with my gloves. "Oh, yes, I remember now. The doorway to that stockroom is seven feet high. The shelves you ordered are ten feet high. Is that right?"

"Oh, yiss." He nodded soberly, full cheeks drooping.

"Too big, Mr. Wu. The shelves are too damned big to go inside the building."

"Yiss." He sighed. "I know. Already tried, but can't be go inside." The plump Chinese clerk shook his head sadly.

"That's it in a nutshell," I answered. "Can't be go inside. What do you suggest we do? Cut the shelves down or make the door bigger?"

He gave the vexing matter earnest consideration. "Oh, no pliss," he said, and then smiled hugely. "Today tried. Too big. Tomorrow. . . Try again."

I was staring at Mr. Wu. Shepherd's plane was nearly on the ground; I heard

Mr. Wu

him turn on his final traffic leg. Under the brilliant fluorescent glare of the overhead lamp, I tried to keep pace with Mr. Wu's startling proposal. "You mean," I said slowly, "that you won't change anything. Just try again. . . Tomorrow. And the next day too, if they don't fit?"

"Oh yiss." He smiled happily at me and waited, as if for applause. I shook my head vigorously, pulled my gloves on, and started for the door. Mr. Wu's thinking, especially on engineering problems, went far beyond my poor abilities. It opened a whole new field of philosophy, and so I just got in my jeep like a dullard and drove to the runway intersection.

The red runway lights stretched away on both sides, and the control tower was an oval cone under the low clouds. As the plane came down through the soup, I could imagine Shep's handsome face, grave as he stared at the instrument panel and jockeyed the yoke. Finally his plane broke out, off to the right of the runaway. My jaw muscles tightened as I saw how hot he was, and how far off line. But he just kicked her up on one wing tip and slipped her over.

He nearly put the wing of the big transport into the ground. Not quite, and then his tires were squealing faintly on the runway. Shep had been one of the AVG boys, and he was a little careless. Fighter pilot blood, I guess. He rolled past me with the landing lights boring bright paths into the darkness, and then he slammed on one brake and swung her around. When he made my corner, he batted the throttles triumphantly, a blast of welcome.

On the way out to the bungalow, he sat beside me and whistled softly. His Chinese co-pilot and radio operator sat in back of us chattering like a firecracker factory, and when we let them out Shep sighed with relief. The black karakul shako slanted across the curly head, and in the dimness he had a profile like the ones they put on newly minted coins.

"We got trouble, cousin Jake," he said. His face was vivid for a second, bathed in the glow of the lighter flame, his lips tense around the cigarette.

"So?" I made it casual.

"Hsiao and Liang, those two, both fairly new boys. First trip with me. Guess they thought I didn't savvy Cantonese."

I didn't say anything. Shepherd had instructed Chinese Air Cadets at Ipin, six years ago. The jeep hit a chughole and rattled our spines, and Shep grabbed at the windshield.

"They said somebody was fooling with the planes," he went on slowly, after I had straightened the careening jeep out. "Said that Scoville got his on schedule, and that they were making book on the next one. So somebody knows."

The little vehicle plunged on down the road. A squawking green pigeon, routed from its roost by some undergrowth prowler, flew across in front of us, and nearly came through the windshield. We both ducked instinctively, and the jeep swerved toward the ditch.

"Think I'll walk," shouted Shepherd irritably. "This method don't seem safe, cousin."

"Who's next?" I asked, fighting the wheel.

The tall pilot turned and looked at me. He was half smiling, and the glowing cigarette twitched between his lips. "I am," he said. "Ain't it a caution?"

THE usual bedlam of sounds, shouts and curses was missing as we drove up to the pilots' bungalow. All the lights were on, even out on the porches. As I switched the ignition off and climbed out stiffly, I saw that the pilots were sitting around playing cards and reading the tattered magazines. When I went into the dining room to post the schedule, most of them looked up but nobody said anything. The afternoon shift of crew chiefs was sitting at the long table, eating. They went on doing it, without looking around.

They were all waiting for something. Jeff Turner, the chunky pilot from Oregon, threw his paper aside and walked over to the schedule. While the rest of them watched, covertly, he took out a pencil and slashed a long black mark through his name. That was bad, because Jeff was a good pilot and a brave one.

"I made the war," he said in a tight voice, "but I'll be damned if I try this easy peace-time stuff."

He turned on me, and I was aware of the intent regard of the whole room.

"Get another boy, Jake," he said. "Schedule me for Calcutta, as a passenger, on the next plane."

I nodded at him. It seemed to take me ten minutes to light a cigarette. Sucking deeply on it, I said, "Good enough," and blew out the acrid smoke. Then I pointed at the schedule. "Who else wants a concert ticket?"

Nobody spoke, but a movement started among them. They shifted.

"Time to get rid of a few shoe clerks, Jake!" It was Shepherd singing out. He had come in back of me. "That way, everybody'll make more money, and it won't be so dangerous up there." Shepherd was the top freight pilot on the line; he carried a lot of weight. The whispering stopped, and Catfish Risley drawled from a corner that he would stick around awhile. Catfish was another Flying Tiger, but he had a voice like a frustrated eunuch.

"Gettin' kind of old and useless anyway," he whined, and went back to playing acey-deucey.

That did it—temporarily, anyway—so I turned and went out the door. It was dinner time. I hadn't eaten in ten hours, but I had no desire to sit downstairs in the center of that group of frightened men. . . Men who had flown the Himalayas in wartime without looking back, but who were now wound too tight at a danger somewhere in their own ranks.

Sitting in my room, I had a straight shot of gin. Then I threw the dirty mosquito netting back and lay down. My head was pounding like a circus drum as I sorted through the possibilities for the thousandth time. It could be one of the smuggling syndicates, in either Calcutta or Kunming, that one of the boys had crossed up. It could be a Nip operating among us, but that didn't seem likely with the war over so long. Perhaps, with all our Indian employees, it was a patriot slugging at capitalist corporations with us as fall guy. Or one of the Chinese personnel, gunning for Americans in general. Any personal vendetta would have stopped with one, or a few, killings, but this string of ours kept going on. Wearily, I thought perhaps it was just a plain vanilla lunatic, seeing if he could destroy a whole airline.

I was trying to get some kind of pattern out of the last few crashes when my door opened. It was Reynolds, the maintenance superintendent. He was a lean man with sloping shoulders and thinning hair. His eyes were red-veined from drinking, a pursuit which he followed very faithfully, and his hands were gnarled and cut from his early days as a mechanic. I raised up on one elbow.

"On the table," I said, and he went straight to the bottle. After he had a drink, he sat down and fanned himself with the limp straw hat.

"You going to shut down tonight?" he asked huskily.

"No." I dropped back on the bed. "Not as long as we've got an open alternate. Jorhat's O.K."

He grunted at that and I heard the bottle clink.

"Understand your men are making book on the next stiff," I said quietly, still staring at the ceiling. The clinking noise stopped.

"How do you mean?"

"I mean they got the next candidate for a wooden kimono all picked out," I said, anger flaring behind my eyes. Sit-

ting up, I brushed the netting aside. "Where the hell do they get their information?"

Reynolds swirled the gin around in the glass. "Maybe it's something personal," he said.

"If it is, the guy that's doing it is mad at a lot of people. . . "

He didn't answer, just tossed the gin into his mouth and rolled it around. How a man can do that is beyond me. I watched him savor it, and the thin shoulders lift. When he looked up, his mouth was working. He put one hand up to cover it, as though that would stop the trembling, but one hand was not enough. So he used the other one, too, savaging at his face. I noticed the livid scars on his hands, where he had been burned in the Natal fire. After he had worked his face over good, he dropped the hands.

"You keep Shep on the ground," he said, and stood up.

"Why?" I said it fast, but he was already moving.

"Keep him on the ground," he repeated dully and went out the door, jamming the straw hat on his head. He didn't even close the door. I was sitting there, but wishing I was back in Texas when Jeff Turner walked into the room.

"All right?" I looked up at him wearily.

"Sorry, sahib." He twisted a chair around, and sat facing me. "I'd like to make a trip tonight."

"Good boy." I managed a smile. "Saves me the trouble of finding another pilot and of offering you a drink." He nodded, and began pulling irritably at his chin.

"Just blew my top, Jake," he said.

"Naturally." I got up and poured myself a shot. "Got me scared, too, and I just go as far as the airport."

While I was drinking, Hank Ridgeway came in and, without any invitation, had one for himself. Hank was a stocky pilot with sandy hair. A wide scar ran from up in his hair down across his left cheek, so that he seemed to be leering constantly. His right arm was in a dirty cast. The scar had been a gift of Likiang Mountain, when he crashed into it at night. Against all logic, he had survived, and walked out through the jungles. Naga tribesmen had led him in to our base. The broken arm was a product of the waxed floor in his Calcutta apartment. After a long session of lacing champagne with cognac, he had given his Groucho Marx impersonation. This consisted of blacking his upper lip, flexing his knees, and gliding around the room swiftly. Two comedy falls had received such an ovation that he had done a third and fractured his forearm.

Hank was understandably nervous about not being able to fly, but he still got his base pay. The company flight surgeon had taken an extremely dim view of the broken arm, but had not sent him back to the States. So he helped me in operations, and sang bawdy songs in the bungalow until all hours. He said hello to Turner, waved the drink at me, and asked what I was killing all the pilots for. I said there were too many of them, that they made me nervous. The answer seemed satisfactory, so he sat down and the three of us talked for an hour.

It was nearly ten o'clock when Ramu came to stand silently in the doorway. Ramu was a tall Bengali with graying hair. He was our head bearer, and had far more natural dignity than the King of England. I asked if the crews were ready, and the native salaamed and went away noiselessly.

Turner and Ridgeway got up with me, and we went downstairs.

The scheduled pilots were ready. Their flight gear was stowed into three command cars and two jeeps. The men were in a group by the dining room doorway, and they watched me come down. In the bulky leather flying suits, they looked like they weighed a ton apiece. Shep was in with them, and I stopped in front of him.

"Might not be your night, kid," I said.

A grin slashed across his handsome face, framed under the black shako. "Plato says no man is entirely free, cousin," he answered lightly. "Leave us go out to the flying machines."

As I turned away, I saw Reynolds move from the side door into the dining room. He had been standing in the shadows under the stairway. The small caravan of jeeps and command cars went rolling out of the cobbled courtyard, and the jackal songs quieted as it roared past.

A cold rain, nearly frozen, came sifting down from the low clouds and spattered on the windshields like bursting diamonds.

CHAPTER II

SHOWER OF DEATH

WHEN we got to the airport, I told Shep to wait in the office. He laughed at that, but his face was tightening when he sat down. While I briefed the rest of them on the latest pilot reports, he smoked one cigarette after another, squinting into the glare of the fluorescent lamp over my desk. After the other pilots had shouldered their gear and trudged out toward the customs building, I nodded at Shep and he got up.

We drove out to the line and picked up Blackie Lao, who was on a stand installing an artificial horizon. Rain was pouring down, and I stood out in it shouting at him. My temper was already frayed, and the cold stream pouring down my neck didn't improve it. Finally the mechanic came down the iron ladder and got in with us. He listened quietly while I explained. Blackie's misshapen face was a tribute to his father's wanderlust, for he was half Chinese and half West Indian Negro. He had dark skin, a Negroid mouth, Oriental eyes, and fuzzy hair. He was a smart boy, however, and the best of the crew chiefs on duty.

When we got to Shep's plane, Blackie jumped out and made a methodical exterior check. We could see the beam of his flashlight probing at the gear and inspection plates, flashing up into the wheel wells, and darting around the engine cowlings. As we sat there watching him work, I could hear Shep breathing beside me. Rain hammered at the flimsy top of the jeep, and when Blackie climbed aboard the plane and switched on the cabin lights, we followed him. The search went on. We looked in the can, in the tail wheel well, tested all the control cables, and searched the radio compartment.

Blackie's hands moved swiftly. He knew every inch of the big Douglas transport and he covered it thoroughly. Shep went forward, got in the cockpit, and moved slowly through the check procedure, trying to discover a flaw. While I smoked and listened to the other planes taking off through the drumming rain, counting them as they left, the dark Chinese mechanic and the pilot prowled through the interior of that particular plane—the one that was supposed to take care of Shepherd.

Finally Blackie came up to me. His thick lips were twisted doubtfully. "Don't find anything, Captain Early," he said. "It seems a good plane." He had a faint trace of a British accent, another gift from his ambulatory father, and I crushed out my cigarette on the metal floor. Shepherd came back to join us, and reported that everything was ding hao in the cockpit.

"O.K.," I said. "You stay in the plane, Shep, and Blackie, you stand guard outside. I know it's raining, but it can get worse than wet tonight."

The mechanic nodded gravely, and

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has switched to Calvert because Calvert makes a lighter highball

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jumped out onto the ground. I whispered to Shep to watch both the plane and Blackie, and then I went out to the jeep. As I started it, Shep leaned out of the wide cargo doorway, and asked what about customs clearance. I shook my head, and drove back to get his crew. When they were aboard, the door slammed shut, Blackie pulled the pins out of the gear, and then got in the jeep with me.

We watched while the whining starters energized and the big prop blades started ticking over. When both fans were roaring, Shep let the parking brakes off and taxied by us, shaking one thumb in salute. We followed him down the curving taxi strip, and stopped the jeep while he ran his engines up. That took several minutes, and then the plane lumbered out on the runway and swung around. When the lights flipped on, we could see rain slanting into them almost solidly. The engines roared to full power as the earthbound bird rolled forward, gathering speed. The tail came up, and the plane's wheels lifted slowly off the glistening runway.

The engine roar was dwindling and the ascending plane had nearly vanished into the overcast before I began to relax. The red runway lights left bloody streaks across the wet asphalt, and I was rubbing at my eyes when a tremendous explosion ruptured the sky at the north end of the field. It was a searing burst of flame that lighted up the whole underside of the clouds, and we could see the plane disintegrating into fragments. One large glowing mass fell into the tea gardens at the far end of the field and smouldered brightly for several minutes. Smaller fragments pattered down around us.

I forced myself to watch until it was over. Then I cradled my head on the cool steering wheel. The light, impersonal fall of rain kept coming down.

"Blackie," I said wearily, "you must have missed something."

The black boy sat there beside me, shivering a little from his sodden clothes. "I don't know what it could be, Captain," he said. "I looked at everything I could without tearing the ship apart."

"All right." I flipped the ignition switch and we drove away, back toward the lighted office. When I was inside, I called Schmidt. After I had reported there was a silence at his end.

"Better get some sleep," he said brusquely, and his phone clicked dead. The dark road through the tea gardens was slippery, and the rain kept slanting down in solid sheets. I didn't go to sleep when I got back, however. I drank the rest of the gin. It was quiet outside, except for the whispering, and no jackals called. My head pounded worse than ever as I remembered Shepherd's quotation from Plato.

IT WAS nearly dawn when I awakened. The rain was still falling, but not so heavily. My head ached, but I felt better for the few hours of rest. Standing under the icy needles of the shower, I shivered and tried to remember what had to be done during the day, special cargos and trips, but all I could see clearly was a plane exploding in mid-air. While I was toweling briskly, Ramu came past me and salaamed on his way up the back stairs. He was carrying fresh sheets, and his splayed feet made no sound on the wooden stairway.

There were five pilots eating breakfast, and they nodded without enthusiasm when I came in. Jimmy Scott was sprawled on the corner sofa, and he was the only one that spoke to me. While we were eating, Reynolds came in and joined us, his eyes redder-veined than ever. I asked how much of Shep's plane he had found, and he said not much. He didn't look at me, just kept drinking his coffee. It was interesting to watch him. Both of his trembling hands took the steaming cup halfway and then he bent down. I asked him to be at Schmidt's bungalow at two o'clock. He wanted to know why.

"A rehearsal," I answered. "Next time you know one of the boys is going to get it, we want to schedule him in an old plane. That will make the new ones last longer. More efficient."

The pilots' heads came up slowly and their collective gaze fixed on Reynolds. The little man sat hunched there and you could see his dull white pate under the thinning hair. He didn't answer, and I got up. Jimmy Scott was whistling tunelessly through his teeth, but he

stopped long enough to ask where I was going.

"To see the man," I said harshly, and this time everybody looked up at me. All of them. It was as though a man snatching at a ball of yarn had pulled the right thread and the whole snarl began to unwind. For "The Man" was the gold merchant of Panitola.

"Mind if I come along?" It was Scott again.

"No." I pulled on my gloves, well aware of the other pilots. Jimmy shrugged quickly into his flight jacket and cap, and we went out. A command car came sloshing up and slithered to a halt on the cobbled courtyard. Seven of the night shift pilots bailed out of it, laughing and talking. They went past us into the dining room as though we had not been there at all, and Jimmy ducked across the front seat of the jeep. As we drove away, the slaty sky was beginning to flush with warmth.

Jimmy Scott sat beside me with one foot propped against the dash board. He was old for a pilot, and he had the face of a ravaged kewpie doll, mouth pouting and cheeks sagged by excess. Jimmy had flown almost everywhere. Mountain freight in South America, bush stuff in Alaska, and a two year stretch with the RAF's Eagle Squadron. He had a bronchial affliction that made him seem to be gasping for breath constantly, and his spending was a Calcutta legend. He scattered the large 1,000 rupee notes in his wake like a man giving away advertising circulars, and I had often seen him pull out over $30,000, just to pay for a round of drinks. He flew like he lived, with great carelessness, and where he got his money was none of my business. Except that the abundance of it was the reason I wanted him along.

After an hour's ride, we pulled into the walled yard of the merchant's house in Panitola. A huge jatropha tree framed one side of the porch. The tree was a mass of scarlet blooms, dripping in the cold rain. As we crossed the yard and stepped up on the porch, I gave an absent slap at the leather holster on my hip.

A man was sitting at the far end of the porch, screened by the jatropha tree, and he got up as we approached. He was a meager fellow with a badly pocked face.

"Yes?" He stopped short of us and shot the monosyllable insolently.

"Tell Lal Singh that Captain Early of the China Line would like to see him."

The man with the ruined face smirked. "Much too early," he said. "Perhaps later." He was wearing a cheap, badly fitting suit of the kind that the English sell in the bazaars of India. When I reached out and got him by both lapels, I could feel the shoddy material give way. I shook him up a little and halfway flung him toward the doorway.

"Perhaps now," I said.

The man stumbled and regained his balance. He eyed the holster thoughtfully. Then he turned and went inside the house. While we waited under the wide shelter of the porch, I could hear voices murmuring. Finally the same man came back out and held the door open sullenly. We went through the dark room filled with showcases and shelves and passed into the back room.

It was small and bare except for four chairs and a teakwood table. I had known for a long time that from this room a steady flow of illegal gold poured into China. Faded green bombazine curtains hung over the back door, and as we sat down Lal Singh came in. The merchant was a tall man with a leathery, clean shaven face. His dress was that of a babu, dirty white shirt with the tails out over a lustrous purple cloth skirt, and he wore embroidered slippers. He had obviously dressed in some haste.

"Yes?" His tone was civil. While I was nodding in answer, the man with the pocked face came in to stand behind us.

"We are not shopping," I said bluntly. "All we want is information."

"Any help I can give . . ." He waved his brown hands.

"Thanks." I shifted my chair enough to bring his surly henchman into the line of vision. "We are losing planes. Although the war is over, we expect to lose a few. From the weather or mechanical causes. But someone is causing them to be lost, and we are trying to find out why."

"Naturally." The gold dealer was still standing. "And how can I help?"

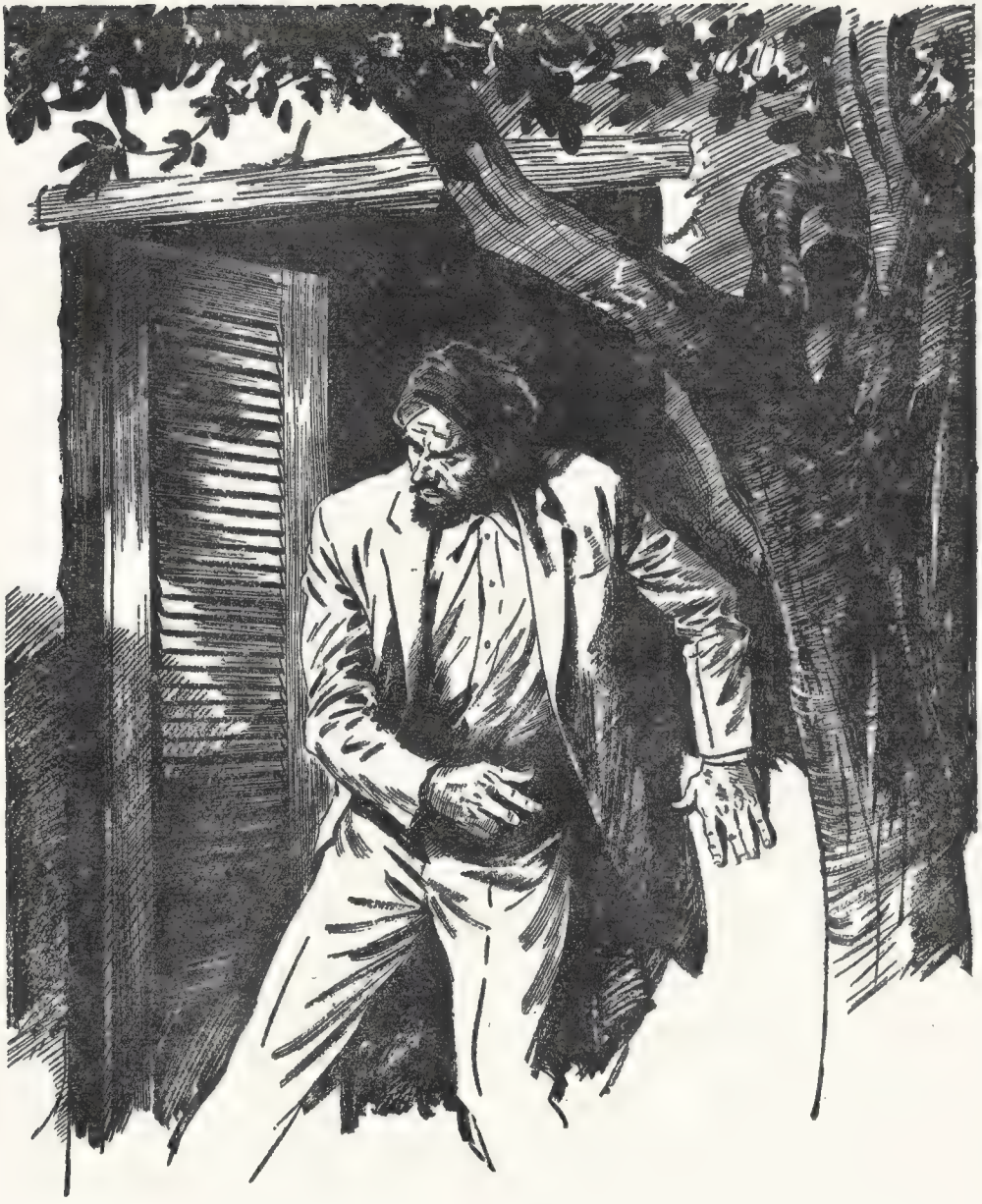
"I'm not sure. A lot of our Chinese

I shook him up a little and halfway flung him toward the doorway. "Perhaps now," I said.

mechanics, and some of our pilots, are buying gold here. Are any of them deeply in your debt? Has anybody tricked you, or bought an especially large load of gold in the last few months?"

The merchant put his head to one side doubtfully; he looked like a corrupt Buddha without all the arms. The other one, in back of me, shifted his feet.

"Because if we don't find out," I went on impatiently, "one day the man who buys from you will go straight from this room to the Calcutta customs office. I will have him flown down and I will personally take him in to see Chatterjee, the Commissioner."



The dealer looked at me blandly, without wavering. "I sell only to licensed people," he said, but his eyes seemed to be hooded. I could tell he was shaken up. When I arose, Scott followed me.

"Think it over," I said. "Send me a chit if you decide to be smart."

"There is nothing . . ."

"All right!" I was beginning to lose my temper. "Then the next time your car, the black LaGonda, is parked beyond our Chinese hostel at midnight, I will fire on it." Wheeling, I came face to face with the insolent man, and he stepped back a little. "This man," I went on, "was on Dinjan aerodrome last night, thirty min-

utes before we lost our last plane. I had better not see him there again."

Lal Singh shot a glance at the man. "I have no desire to become involved . . ." he said.

At the doorway, I hitched my gloves on viciously. "If you don't get smart," I answered angrily, "I hope to involve you in an Indian prison for about fifty years."

Scott did not follow me immediately. I thought I heard a murmur, and then his hurried footsteps sounded. He caught up as I paced through the empty shop and out past the scarlet tree to the jeep. It was only misting, and the early morning fog billowed out over the tea gardens so that the mountains to the north and east were blotted from sight.

SIX of us met at Schmidt's bungalow that afternoon. The rain had completely stopped, and sunlight poured down over the neat grounds. Squatting natives looked up disinterestedly from their gardening work as we walked past them to the faded white house. Schmidt had ordered drinks for everybody and Suklo passed them around. Besides Schmidt and myself, there was Reynolds, beaten and drawn, and scarred Hank Ridgeway. George Leong, a bronzed Eurasian pilot, came in with his usual rush. He was a trim boy and moved as lightly as a dancer. Turner was with him and we all sat down in the split bamboo chairs. Schmidt got up and gave it to us straight.

"Somebody," said the aging, massive pilot, "is trying to put us out of business. We don't know how it's being done, but we are damned sure it is. Weather and bad luck are one thing. Murder's another."

He said it bluntly, running one hand over his cropped gray hair and all of us shifted a little. The China War had brought us close to death in many forms, but individual murder, announced plainly like that, was upsetting.

"I have told Jake," Schmidt rumbled on, "that if we don't get this business stopped, the line will shut down next Friday. To do that would mean the loss of several hundred thousand dollars, and might get our freight contracts cancelled. But I will be perpetually damned if we keep on with this nightmare."

The division manager plucked a long twisted cheroot from the pale jade box on the mantel and lighted it. After two tentative puffs, he turned on Reynolds.

"Who told you Shepherd was next?" he asked harshly.

Reynolds had been waiting for it; his head lifted. The scrawny neck tightened, and he seemed to hold his breath.

"You don't have to tell me," said Schmidt, "but if you don't, you are about as fired as a man can get."

Reynolds exhaled slowly. "Not that," he answered. "That makes no difference . . ." He hesitated. "Blackie Lao has been telling me," he stammered and licked at his lips nervously. "We—have been running—little stuff across. Sulfa, mostly."

"How does he find out?"

"I don't know." Reynolds looked squarely at Schmidt. "He never has said."

There was a silence in the big room. All six of us sat there thinking about it and I was especially happy. Out of all the crew chiefs, I had picked Blackie to run up Shep's plane. That helped a whole lot. It was like swinging the meat axe yourself. The warm sunlight came through the open windows, and made patterned gold squares on the worn Bokhara rug.

"It's this damned smuggling," I said bitterly, and they all glanced over at me.

Schmidt nodded slowly, the thin cigar rolling between his lips. "It could be," he agreed. "Have you got the list?"

I pulled the folded paper out of the pocket of my battle jacket and tossed it to him. He was standing up, facing us, and the list was a blank piece of paper, but the others couldn't tell that.

"For two weeks," said Schmidt, unfolding the paper, "Jake has been making a list of everybody who approached the planes. That means mechs, pilots, flight crews, business department men, load inventory people, radio men, everybody . . ." He was staring down at the paper as he spoke, and he glanced up at me with a look of amazement on his face. He did it so naturally that I nearly loused the act up, but finally I nodded. "So that," Schmidt went on, "the name

or names that show up in connection with the death planes should include whoever is running this private morgue."

"Pilots don't mess with planes they're not flying," said Ridgeway, and Schmidt nodded.

"True," he said, "but just for luck, we have included the names of all the pilots who were on the same schedules. That might mean something. The gimmick may be a time explosive in one of the gas tanks. The left auxiliary would be the most likely, since that's takeoff tank. But it could be anywhere. So tomorrow we're going to take a little ride . . ."

"Where?" asked George Leong. His handsome face, product of Manchu and Scottish bloods, was entirely serious.

"Just a trip," answered Schmidt. "And all the names that showed up on this list too often, in the wrong places, will be along." He turned to Reynolds. "What's the next coffin?"

The maintenance superintendent was looking down at the floor and his hands were working slightly. "Blackie said to keep everything off . . . 110," he almost whispered. It was so low you could hardly hear it.

"Good." Schmidt jammed the list into his pocket. Turning to me he said, "Put the Ghurka guards on that one. Nobody touches it until we meet out there in the morning. Seven o'clock. No cargo, but full tanks."

"Who else goes?"

Schmidt grinned humorlessly. "I'll fly. Get Mao for the radio, and you'll go copilot."

That was interesting. I said that I was a comparatively young man, and he said not to worry about it. Oh no. Just climb aboard the damned thing when I knew any control we touched, any move we made, might blow us higher than the Patkai Range. That was a very small thing to ask of a man.

"I won't go," growled Turner. He said it flatly, and Schmidt wheeled to face him.

"You're wrong," the bull-shouldered old pilot said. "You will go. I'll herd

"Somebody," Schmidt said, "is trying to put us out of business. We don't know how it's being done, but we are damned sure it is."

you in with a .45, if necessary. And I'll drop you if that's necessary. I intend to stop this business."

He would have, too. It was his nature. The big man and the stocky young one stared at each other, and finally Turner dropped his gaze.

"I'd like to go, Schmitty," said Ridgeway, leering out of that ruined cheek. Excitement was shining like a current in his eyes.

"All right," Schmidt nodded.

"Me, too," said Leong, lunging up from the chair. He had seen Suklo come to the doorway with our hats. We trooped out of the bungalow into the sunshine, and the other three got into the command car. While Hank and I were climbing into the jeep, they drove off down the red clay road toward the field.

CHAPTER III

EXTREME PATRIOTISM

WE WERE rolling after them when Hank asked who had been scheduled in 110. I told him Jimmy Scott, and he grunted, but I didn't ask him to interpret the grunt. I already knew more things than I could understand, so I let it go. We went along like that with the glistening green tea bushes on both sides of us until we came to the Chabua intersection. To save time, I swerved off the main road and we skirted down through the bamboo groves. We were rounding a sharp corner when Ridgeway shouted, "Wait!" so loudly that I nearly went off the road. I braked suddenly, and looked at him. He was pointing.

A car was in the ditch. It was a black sedan, and as we approached it on foot, I could see that it was not badly damaged. Hank was ahead of me, limping swiftly. The car was resting on one side, and he jerked the top door open. Since the water in the ditch was a foot deep, I waited on the bank, watching Ridgeway. He climbed on the car, wriggled both legs up and disappeared. In not more than three seconds, his head popped back out, staring at me.

"It's the man!" he shouted. "Somebody's been doin' a little amateur surgery on him."

I went down the slope, into the water, and climbed up on the car's tilted side. Between Hank's spraddled legs, I could see the two men inside. They were Lal Singh, the gold merchant, and his henchman with the bad complexion. Facial blemishes were no longer a matter of concern, however, because both their throats had been cut. The upholstery was stained in two large pools, and Lal Singh's loin skirt was indecorously arranged, so that his lean shanks showed. His head was twisted strangely, but that was understandable. The knife had severed all the muscles in his throat.

"I believe somebody was mad at these boys," said Hank.

I nodded and began to search the car, rolling both corpses over. They must have been dead some time, because no blood gouted from their necks when I flopped them over. I didn't find anything. No papers, no gold, nothing. Even the enormous cat's-eye ring that the dealer had worn on his right middle finger was gone. Clambering back out of the little car, I splashed up the incline again, and Hank came back of me. The noise we made flushed a swarm of squawking yellow-breasted birds from the heart of the bamboo grove, and we drove away surrounded by their shrill cries.

When we got to the pilot's bungalow, I called Joachim, the head of His Brittanic Majesty's Customs and Security Section for the Assam Control Zone, and told him briefly where the car was. Joachim was excited, and he wanted more details, but I hung the phone up and went back to take a cold shower. My belly muscles were jumping and my throat was dry. I was getting a little sensitive to murder, even of crooked gold merchants. While I was putting on a fresh uniform, Hank came up and had a drink. Then I went out to the airport and spent the rest of the night waiting for an engine to miss.

The planes kept banging back and forth on schedule, but nothing happened. Our Ghurka guards stood like small graven statues around Number 110, parked across from the office, and every three hours I could hear the gut-

tural barkings as the shifts relieved each other. About three in the morning, the clouds massed again, and it began to rain. The wind rose steadily, and for an hour we had one of the violent storms that come down out of the Tibetan ranges without warning. By four, we had a surface wind of forty-three miles an hour, so I sent the planes on to Tezpur.

During the storm, I sat with my feet on the desk, checking flight logs and confirming radio position reports. Water whipped off the thatched roof of the office and put a wavering curtain between my doorway and the howling darkness outside, but I knew the Ghurkas would still be there. Finally I went to sleep in my chair, and just after dawn Mr. Wu came in and shook me. He nodded cheerfully and went back out.

The rain had stopped and through a few rifts in the monsoon clouds, weak sunlight was breaking over the field. Through the office window, I could see Reynolds riding up and down the line in his car, pulling the mechanics off their work. The chattering Chinese workmen came sliding and jumping down from the big metal stands. While I was watching them, the teletype chattered for a few seconds and its bell jangled. I walked over and ripped the yellow paper from its maw.

"All planes safely down and guarded," the message read. It was signed Burt, Kunning. Mr. Wu came bustling back in, fat and smiling in his black suit, and put a sheaf of the latest weather reports on my desk. Then he stood there beaming at me.

"The shelves," he barked.

"Yes, Mr. Wu. What about them?" I was still half asleep, and yawned at the scissoring red GMT hands on the wall clock. Twelve minutes to go.

"Storm last night blow roof off stockroom basha," he anounced loudly, and I nodded.

"So?"

Wu straightened the cutaway hat with a pudgy hand. "Shelves O.K. now. Will be go inside."

I stared at him, and the memory of the non-fitting shelves came flooding back. When I started laughing, the plump little Chinese boy stood there and nodded, delightedly. I hauled a bottle out of the desk and had a touch of it. The laughter was a release; it had been a long time since anybody had laughed in that office.

"Mr. Wu," I said, "my congratulations. I regard that as a distinct triumph. Later on, perhaps, we can arrange for another roof."

His rubicund face was wreathed in self-appreciation. "Yiss," he answered, as though another storm would certainly blow another roof back on the stockroom —after we had the shelves inside. "Oh, yiss."

The sunlight was a faint warmth as I put on my battered flight cap and went out of the office. I was still smiling at Mr. Wu's engineering feat, but the mirth faded as I saw the hundred-odd mechanics gathered around 110. As I was walking across the taxi strip, Schmidt's maroon Ford turned in from the Belijan road and rolled swiftly to the line. Back of him were ten command cars loaded with flight crews. When they all drew up and stopped, it made an appreciable gathering. Some of the pilots had gotten only two or three hour's sleep, and they looked glum in the pale sunlight. Counting the pilots, mechanics, radio and business department personnel, there must have been three hundred men grouped around the big plane.

THEY stood there in the early morning sunlight and most of them were talking in low tones. Joachim, the customs officer, was motioning to Reynolds, who did not seem to be listening. Schmidt climbed up the metal steps into the plane, and stood looking out over the strangely assorted group of Americans, Chinese, English, and Hindustani.

The district manager was wearing a radio headset around his thick neck, and a flight cap, heavy with tarnished braid and the fluted China wings, was on his head. He stood framed in the wide doorway. When he spoke, the murmuring faded and died away.

"Some of you haven't had much sleep and we know it," he said. "But it was the best time." He leaned forward and put one hand on the edge of the open door. "This line has been losing planes

and somebody among you is responsible for it."

There was a sigh, like a collective intaking of breath, out in the crowd.

"So this morning some of us are taking a ride," Schmidt went on briskly. "The plane is empty. According to our information, this job . . ." The aging pilot banged on the metal door with his fist ". . . is the next one to go. Ragar!"

"Sahib?" The spindly Ghurka sergeant stepped up from the rear of the plane and stood at attention before Schmidt.

"Place your men."

The Ghurka wheeled and his voice crackled in emphatic Urdu. As he called out, his guards formed a cordon around the plane, forcing the crowd back. The little brown men were not polite about it either. When they were in a full circle, Schmidt spoke again.

"As I call out your names," he said, "come forward and get on board. Come straight from where you are. Don't take a backward step, because if you do, the guards have been ordered to fire. Don't move unless your name is called . . ."

Shouldering my way forward, I jumped up the steps and stood beside Schmidt. He looked at me briefly, pulling the list from his pocket, and then he turned back to their collective stare.

"Reynolds!" he called.

The little man scurried forward and got on board. He stood in back of me and I could hear his heavy breathing, like that of an animal.

"Blackie Lao."

The Negro-Chinese crew chief came out of the crowd to the left, and vaulted up beside us. His somber face was grave under the greasy cap.

"Herbert Ling."

The tall Chinese nodded and came up beside us.

"Wu."

"Yiss, yiss." Mr. Wu shouted from the far edge of the crowd, and came boring toward us. His fat face was serious under the mutilated hat.

"Jimmy Scott, Hank Ridgeway, and George Leong . . ."

Leong, husky and bronzed, vaulted up as Lao had done. Ridgeway limped forward grinning ferociously, and climbed up the steps.

"Jimmy Scott," repeated Schmidt.

There was a silence among them. They looked at each other. Shouts of "Scott!" ripped out as they searched with their eyes. Finally they found him, asleep, with his head on a spare tire. He came forward knuckling his eyes, dissipation shadowing his cheeks and clamping at his mouth. He looked like a walking advertisement for a bad hangover.

When all the names were called, there were twenty-seven people in the plane, not counting Schmidt and myself. I jumped down and pulled the pins out of the gear. When I got back aboard and pulled the big door shut, they were all sitting on the metal floor. As I made my way through them, I could feel the tension growing. My own hands were clammy with sweat in the palms, and an erratic nerve started jumping in my cheek.

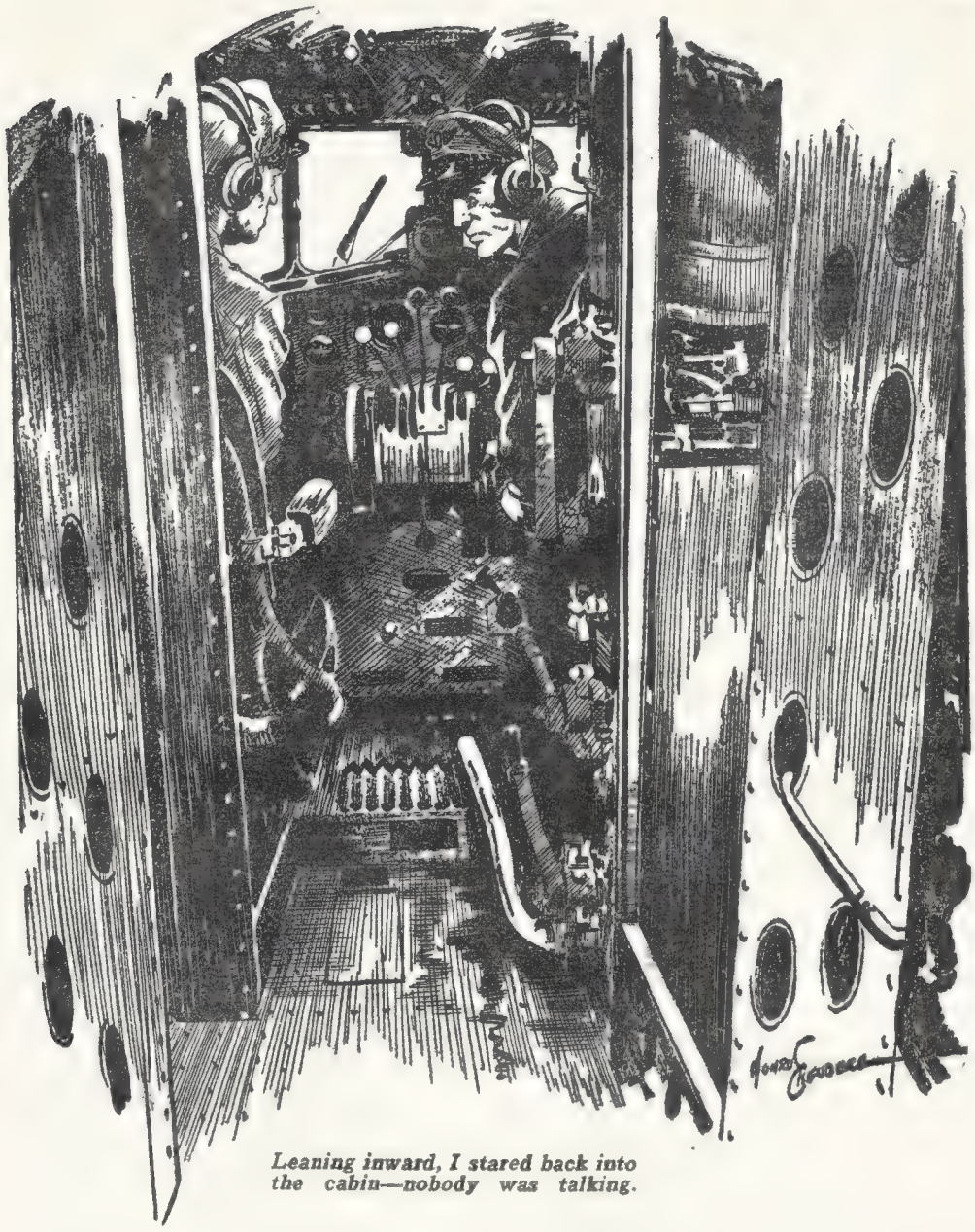
The bad part was not knowing where it might come from. It was something you couldn't guard against. As I dropped into the right hand seat in the pilot's enclosure, the nerve was still puckering my cheek. Schmidt was completing his cockpit check, the blunt hands moving deftly. I remembered that the trip was his idea, and something he didn't have to do. But it was his way, the direct way, and you could sense the power in his bulking shoulders, the artistry in the way he checked the instrument panel. That was a sureness that 18,000 hours of flying had given him. The whole dangerous project was typical of his way of meeting trouble, abruptly and head-on.

When he nodded, I set my earphones and twirled the radio to Dinjan frequency. "Fox Jig tower from Riffraff 110," I called into the hand microphone. "Fox Jig, give me a call, please . . ."

When the tower answered, Schmidt had already started the right engine. I pressed the headset closer to shut out the racket. "Riffraff 110 requests taxi clearance and instructions," I intoned. "Come in, Fox Jig."

The answer was brisk and clear. "Riffraff 110 cleared to taxi south on the south strip. Is that a local flight, 110?"

"Roger. Or at least, we hope it is. 110 over and out." I clamped the mike in place and sat back as the ship rolled out. Schmidt was leaning forward, watching the wing clearance on both sides, and once he stared at me briefly. Only for



Leaning inward, I stared back into the cabin—nobody was talking.

a second, but I could see the flat planes along his jaw. He was tightening up, too, and that thought somehow consoled me.

Leaning inward, I stared back into the cabin. Nobody was talking, but some of them were smoking. Mao, the radio operator, was sitting perfectly straight back of his set, and it looked unnatural. The rest of them were all caught listening, their eyes sharpened and attentive. Every turn of the big props had their full interest. Scott was the only one who smiled, and his was rueful. He cradled his forehead in both hands, and shook it dolefully.

Schmidt was rolling the plane swiftly,

and you could hear the tires singing. When we reached the entrance to the runway, the old pilot stopped the Douglas suddenly and expertly, set the parking brakes, and throttled back until the big propellers were only ticking over slowly.

Without turning his head, he spoke to me. His heavily veined hands were clenched on the red throttle knobs.

"Go back and see what you can do," he said.

I edged out of the seat and went back into the cabin. The suspects were slumped along the walls, and they all looked at me.

"In about thirty seconds," I announced, loud enough to be heard over the noise of the idling engines, "Captain Schmidt is going to take this plane upstairs. He will run up the engines, first, and then he will take off. If the plane's been tampered with, if it is like the rest of them, there will be a hell of an explosion in about two minutes."

They watched me intently. Nobody moved.

"If anybody knows a good reason why we should taxi this job back and park it, this is the time to speak up." My voice was a little strained; it fell over their uplifted faces. "Because if nobody says anything, there is a fair chance we'll all be scattered up and down the Hukawng Valley before long . . ."

NO ONE spoke. Reynolds coughed, a spasm, and passed one hand over his trembling mouth. After a long wait, I turned and shook one thumb at Schmidt, and he began to throttle forward. The tempo of the engines grew louder and louder, and the plane began to shake from the fury of the thundering Pratts. I was almost dancing, and I had to reach up and grab the parachute ripcord line. The vibration of the plane made their faces jiggle before me.

"All right!" I shouted. "Dammit, ride in her then . . ."

When I slipped back into the copilot's seat, Schmidt was still crowding the engines, his mouth tightened and hard. The fluid line showed 49 inches of mercury pull, and the plane was bouncing lightly, trying to free itself of the brakes. When Schmidt shot a quick look at me, I shook my head and he taxied out on the runway.

When he was faced to the north, I called the tower and got takeoff clearance. The mike fell out of my hand as I attempted to clamp it into place, and my cheek was throbbing worse than ever. As Schmidt moved the throttle knobs forward, I laced my fingers back of them. The big transport started down the runway, gathering speed, and just as the tail lifted, there was a scurrying in the hallway back of the pilot's enclosure. I had the pistol out and ready as I turned, but I didn't need it.

It was only Mr. Wu.

Schmidt throttled back, fighting to get her slowed. We had already used up half the runway, and it was going to be close, for the big plane was hurtling forward. The pilot was stomping on the brakes, and my own legs stiffened as I tried to help him. The end of the runway rushed up at us like a blur, and Schmidt kicked right rudder, hard. The plane slewed around with a frightening wail of rubber. I figured it for a sure ground loop and braced myself, pushing against the instrument panel with both hands. We went sliding sideways for fifty feet, with the agonized tires shredding under us, and then recovered with a sickening lurch.

Nobody spoke for a few seconds, and then Schmidt snapped on the brakes.

"We go back now, please," said Mr. Wu politely. "I did not think you would really try to take off, Captain."

Schmidt grimaced and swallowed. His lips were taut, spread thin, and his broad forehead was glistening with sweat. He looked at Mr. Wu in silence, and then began to taxi back. I picked the mike up from the floor, and told the tower what we were doing.

"Please," said Mr. Wu. "Stop the plane, Captain."

Schmidt stomped the brakes, and, while I watched, the plump little Chinese leaned across him and shifted the supercharger handle from low to high blower.

"Why?" asked Schmidt.

"Is now really in low blower, Captain," said Wu. "The other way, it would not have been safe very long."

Schmidt nodded grimly. We looked at each other, beginning to understand. Wu had transposed the indicator readings on the supercharger. The drive shaft into the clutch was therefore doing over 30,000 revolutions per minute, instead of the safe action of low blower. An explosive in that clutch housing, exposed to the tremendous heat generated there, would produce just about the effect I had seen in Shepherd's case. It would blow the plane apart. Getting hold of explosives would be a cinch; they were one of our high priority cargoes, and we had tons of them in our warehouse.

We taxied back and parked. The propellers gurgled to silence after Schmidt cut the switches, and the passengers stood up as we passed through the cabin. Schmidt and I flanked Wu across the taxi strip, and the little Chinese boy walked swiftly, looking straight ahead. The crowd had increased by several hundreds, and they parted before us like a receding wave.

When we were in the office, Schmidt threw his headset on the desk and sat down in my chair. I closed the door, and put my back to it. Mr. Wu stood in the center of the room. The cutaway campaign hat didn't look silly on him now. For such a small, stout boy, he had a dangerous dignity. The glowing radio receiver began to growl out a coded weather message, and Schmidt switched it off impatiently.

"Why, Mr. Wu?" he asked.

The boy made a gesture with his hands, upspread and hopeless. "In my town, and all over China, people are unable to eat properly because of inflation. More than anything else, it was the smuggling from here that caused it. And so—" Wu put his head to one side—"I decided to stop the smuggling."

"I see." Schmidt drummed on the desk with his blunt fingers. "You knew what would happen when we caught up with you?"

Wu smiled faintly. "Yes, I knew." He stood there without any other visible emotion than the trace of a smile. Bland and unshaken, he had deliberately set out to destroy an airline.

Four of the lost ships were definitely his work, and some of the others may have been.

"Didn't it occur to you that you might be killing innocent men?" I asked, and he faced toward me.

"Yes, Captain," he said, "but every time I changed the supercharger handles and put the nitroglycerin in, that ship was loaded with gold. It was necessary that the gold did not get to Kunming. The few innocent ones could not be helped."

"What about Lal Singh?" It was Schmidt again, and politely Mr. Wu turned to face him.

"It was a great pleasure to kill the gold merchant," the boy said calmly. "He was the only one I enjoyed killing."

Schmidt grunted, and I opened the door to admit Joachim. The customs official came bustling in, nodded to both of us, and asked if we wanted "the little beggar" taken into custody. Schmidt nodded, and Joachim turned Mr. Wu by one elbow.

"What charge?" asked Joachim briskly, from the door.

Schmidt stared past him into the sunlit morning brightness.

"Better make it extreme patriotism," he said gruffly.

Joachim's dark face was puzzled. He decided it was an American joke, and smiled uncertainly. Then he went out, holding Mr. Wu by the arm. From the window, we could see them going through the clusters of curious people, the tall official in the blue uniform and the imperturbable little boy walking beside him.

That ended the reign of terror that had hung over the China Line. We still lose pilots occasionally, but you can't hale a Himalayan storm into the dock. No, they didn't shoot Mr. Wu. He escaped from Joachim's jail. On a pathway littered with bundles of rupees, I imagine, since Joachim is a very great realist.

They say, around Assam fires, that a plane bearing the insignia of the Chinese Air Corps landed at an abandoned fighter strip, and picked the fat boy up. If that's true, I'll bet the jackal songs were loud that morning. They won't ever catch him.

China has millions of men his age, and, at least to me, they all look very much like Mr. Wu.

DAY OF RECKONING

By
WILLIAM ARTHUR BREYFOGLE

They filed out of the warehouse with their hands in the air. The firing had stopped.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROGER L. THOMAS

"WE'D cut a way with machetes," said John Burke, "through jungle as thick as a hedge. Sometimes a gaudy parrot flew up, screeching, and the whole command flung themselves flat and got their rifles ready. Then—nothing but silence, and the officers cursed, and we picked ourselves up and went on. The times when we needed it, no parrot ever warned us; it was as if the solid jungle itself had opened fire! There'd be never less than a half-dozen shot, and some of them lay screaming where they fell. In this climate, what happens to a bullet-wound isn't pretty."

In all the times I heard him tell the story, John Burke never raised his voice, never varied his account, never strove for effect. He let the story tell itself, so to speak, and it would be unlike Burke to

have reflected that that was as effective a way of telling it as any other.

"Diego Caron!" he said. "Judge him for yourself—a man who would load a mule with stolen dynamite and light the fuse and drive the beast down into our camp! One day, we came upon a crowd of women washing clothes at a ford we had to cross. They had the loose, long gowns that women of the villages wear down here, and they didn't answer the jokes we called out to them. They let us get up to our waists and our shoulders, in mid-current, and then they tore off the gowns and it was Caron and his cut-throats! They killed seventeen of us that day. I remember how the blood ran down the stream. When they ran, when the firing ended, the noise of the water was like drums. That loud!"

It was hard to see in the John Burke I knew—a middle-aged hotel-keeper in San Jaime—the John Burke of twenty-five years ago—a private in the United States Marines. San Jaime is the principal port and capital of a tropical American country it would be inexact to call a republic. It can do no great harm to change the proper name and call that country Pernaquil. The discerning reader may guess its true identity from the fact that the Marines were down there during the 'Twenties. Their mission was to restore order to a nation in which order had always been a decidedly exotic growth. The order they managed to impose scarcely outlasted their departure.

One of the several anomalous things about John Burke was that, as soon as the term of his enlistment was up, he returned to Pernaquil. For none of the usual reasons. He was not in love at the time; he was under no necessity to leave the United States, and it was not to make money. He went back to San Jaime, as I believe, to be near Diego Caron, whom he hated.

This sounds most implausible, but I think it is true. John Burke was just twenty when he took part in that bitter jungle-fighting. Its sheer savagery first horrified him, then bred in him a slow and lasting anger. He saw his comrades fall victims to Diego Caron's ingenious and unsparing methods of warfare, and he remembered how their blood had run down with the current of a stream, and their cries when they lay dying. But what seems to me especially noteworthy is that he did not put all this out of his mind, or even try to.

Something in the man's nature made him grapple with it as a problem to be solved. A personal problem, to which no one but himself could find an answer. Martin Luther, confronted with the shape of evil, flung an ink-pot at it, but John Burke acted more deliberately. As a first step, he came back to San Jaime and settled down there.

WHEN I first knew him, John Burke was the proprietor of the Costa Brava, a small hotel down by San Jaime's waterfront. As things went in Pernaquil, he was a prosperous man, and as things go anywhere, his marriage was a happy one. Anna was forty when I met her, but girls half her age still turned to stare at her with that sharp attention women bestow upon the objects of their frank envy. She was beautiful without being vain, shrewd without being shrewish, and she made Burke a fine wife.

Indeed, considering his present estate, a frivolous question puzzled me. If Burke had merely shrugged off those early impressions Diego Caron had made upon him, he might very probably have stayed in the Marine Corps. It was fair to suppose that he would have been a sergeant by now, if he had not got himself killed somewhere. I do not want to belittle the Marine Corps, but, as it was, he had done better than that for himself by far. He had plenty of money, a pleasant life—and Anna. Was it because he had made an essentially impractical and unworldly choice that these other blessings had been added unto him?

"I don't know what you find to write about," Burke said one day, in the bar of the Costa Brava. "I don't know why your paper keeps you here."

"Because I'm not good enough to cover a more important post. Someone has to be here, in case of a volcano or a revolution."

"Revolutions aren't what they were. The last two or three had everyone laughing, they were so clumsy! Old Caron simply told the police to look after them, and they did."

"One advantage of having been a revolutionary himself, I suppose."

"That's a long name for what Caron was!"

"Well, it made him perpetual Minister of War, at least."

"Another long name! He's the Boss, and everyone knows it! When they pulled us out, he took to cutting his own countrymen's throats. If you do that to one man, they hang you. But if you do it to a few thousand, they make you Mr. Big!"

"But the very fact that there have been several attempts at a revolution—"

"Oh, another might come at any time, and a serious one. I wouldn't deny that."

"Put it down that I'm waiting for the great day, then! But what about you?"

"I've got the hotel."

"It isn't the hotel that keeps you here; it's because you're determined to stay that you have the hotel. And it isn't a revolution you're waiting for, either."

"Unfinished business!" said Burke. "The kind where no statute of limitations would apply. I'm staying on a chance, like you, only your chance is better than mine. Maybe I shouldn't have asked what it was that kept you here!"

Even a casual interest in the affairs of John Burke dictated a curiosity about Diego Caron. In Pernaquil, I had plenty of time to investigate, and every facility. Diego Caron had never seen any virtue in obscurity.

He was a general, and he had been Minister of War in every cabinet since the revolution, but everyone called him simply The Gamecock. He came by the nickname honestly, for the idiom of his whole life had been violence. A combination of audacity, unscrupulousness and luck had raised him to his present position from the most obscure beginnings. It was paradoxical that he, who seemed temperamentally opposed to all authority, should have survived to become authority himself.

THE best source of information was the obvious one. Diego Caron was a noisy old man, with atrocious manners, and his press conference always turned into boastful monologues. I attended those conferences faithfully.

"They talk to me about what is seemly and respectable. Well, I know, and I spit upon it! All my life I have taken what I wanted, and that is why I am Diego Caron. Diego Caron is not respectable, I tell those half-men, but once he took the whole country, and no one was man enough to stop him!"

He leaned forward. "Respectable! Once, before I made the revolution, the Yankee soldiers pressed us hard, up in the hills. I stole dynamite, and strapped two cases on the back of a mule. Then I lit a fuse and drove the brute down into the Yankees' camp while they ate supper. Ho-ho! Was that respectable?

"Another time, we played an even better trick. We put on women's dresses and pretended to be washing clothes at a ford. When the Yankees came, we let them get into mid-current, and then we snatched up our rifles. They had called out jokes to us, but our joke was better. Ho-ho! They died laughing!"

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But he was not always merely boastful. One day he fell to thinking of his very early years, and he spoke of a hut in a clearing. "It had a grass roof, and the floor was earth, mud. We lived there until I was fourteen, and then the *ranchero* from the next valley sent men to hang my father. He had missed cattle, so he said, and any peasant would do as an example. So they hanged my father, and they made us stay and watch how his legs kicked.

"I crept up by night and shot that *ranchero,* and then I had to run away. I never saw my mother again, or my brothers and sisters. I joined outlaws in the hills, and we made a war on the landowners and the soldiers they hired and, finally, the Yankee soldiers. They tried to hunt us down, so we fought, remembering our wrongs. It was good fighting, that—very good fighting!"

He drew a deep breath, much like a sigh. "Good fighting, and good days! No time for parades, receptions, sitting at a desk—all the wastes of a man's few years! The soldiers fought well, especially those Yankee soldiers. It wasn't until after they had been called home that we could make our revolution. And then the revolution was over, and there was no more fighting at all." He repeated that, on a note of disenchantment and gloom. "No more fighting at all! We were respectable!"

The Diego Caron who emerged from these scraps of autobiography, and others like these, was not identical with John Burke's Diego Caron. When I ventured to remark upon that to Burke, he told me (I paraphrase his words) that Caron had led the life of an animal, and that such a life contemplated no end but death. The intimation was that John Burke would consider it a privilege to hasten that end.

It seemed to me a very curious trick of fate that had opposed one of these men to the other. Caron, of course, knew nothing of that opposition, and might not know of John Burke's existence, even. If he had known, an enemy more or less would be nothing to one whose life had been singularly rich in enmities. Enmity lifted toward a sort of moral plane would have been quite beyond the comprehension of The Gamecock, and so would Burke's long patience. Diego Caron had always dealt summarily with his enemies.

I knew, of course, that what I was piecing together in my mind had begun some twenty-five years before. But, as a spectator, I grew impatient. Nothing is more exasperating than a story that breaks off short in the middle, a situation created and then left unresolved. But what ending could there be to this story, except the quite irrelevant one of Diego Caron's natural death? That would prove only that time solves all problems—which is a platitude. And, in this case, the problem would not be solved but shelved—taken out of John Burke's hands as arbitrarily as it had been placed in them. What was the good of that? One might as well give up grappling with such problems altogether!

Then, for a time, I forgot about John Burke and that fixed purpose of his. Burke's patience still went unrewarded, but I had not waited in San Jaime in vain. There was a revolution, a major one!

IT BEGAN with an uprising led by a Colonel Alvares in the remote province of Del Sur, just before the beginning of the rainy season. The first reports were confused and contradictory, but the place and time had been shrewdly chosen. Certainly, the government in San Jaime thought so, for they sent six regiments of the regular army off to Del Sur with a haste that suggested panic. Diego Caron took the field at their head. No correspondents were allowed near the scene of the fighting, and a strict censorship had been imposed. San Jaime was full of wild rumors.

John Burke said, "If it were just some local hothead, they wouldn't send six regiments, three-quarters of their standing army. Alvares is supposed to know his business. I can't understand, though, why he started his campaign in Del Sur. To make any real impression, he's got to strike for the coast, and the cities. Well, we'll see!"

We did, and before Diego Caron and his six regiments had been gone a week. The uprising in Del Sur had been only a feint. The main force of the revolu-

tionists waited until San Jaime could offer no resistance worth the name, then struck hard and took the capital, after one noisy night.

Diego Caron and his army were still in the back-country somewhere. From the preparations they made, his enemies expected his prompt return. Presumably, they had reports of his movements, but we had none. We waited, and Anna chided us for our impatience.

"It is only a change of government," she said. "It does not concern us."

It concerned John Burke, though not as a change of government. Burke was excited and, in an odd way, alarmed. There was apprehension in his voice when he said, "This time, they may get him!"

"If it's true that all the other members of the government have surrendered or fled—"

"Oh, they don't matter!"

"But how are they to get Caron if he chooses to keep the field, with those six regiments? He can live off the country."

"That's just what he won't do!" said Burke, with certainty. "They don't call him The Gamecock for nothing! He'll throw them out of San Jaime or die trying, and they knew that when they took the capital! What they want is a showdown, and if the rest of them are as smart as Alvares—"

I wanted to laugh, but John Burke would have been surprised and offended. I don't think he was aware of the anxiety in his voice.

As if to heighten the tension, the first of the seasonal rains burst upon San Jaime while we were still waiting for something to happen. It kept us inside the Costa Brava all afternoon and all evening, with nothing to watch but the downpour, nothing to listen to but the gurgling of eaves and gutters. Long after darkness fell, the rain still drummed on the roofs and ran in sheets down the windows. I was reflecting that the censorship had at least saved me from getting soaked to the skin when John Burke sprang up suddenly. "There it is!" he cried.

I had heard nothing, but I went pelting up to the roof of the hotel after him.

Caron's men had struck down from the northwest, and they were already fighting in the outskirts. The rain made it hard to see and hear, but, knowing the city, we could tell that the attack was merely inching forward. "He's got to do better than that!" Burke grumbled. "They'll close in on him from both sides, and then he—"

The sudden uproar broke out just below us, and to the right. Down by the waterfront, where we were, everything had been deathly quiet until then. But now the narrow streets were filled with men, shouting, firing, and running toward the heart of the city. Burke had to shout too, to make me hear, and it made his voice sound jubilant.

"He's split his forces, and brought half of them down by sea! That isn't so bad! Now, if he can make a junction—"

Fighting in the streets of a city is a hard and confusing thing to follow. The rain stopped, but we scarcely noticed that. The rattle and banging of small-arms fire faded, and grew loud, and faded again. It seemed to have broken up into a number of minor engagements that swayed back and forth, with no visible advantage to either side. In the distance, a block of buildings had caught fire and was burning fiercely, utterly disregarded. John Burke said, "It's moving down this way!"

I had to take his word for that, at first. But Burke pointed toward the outskirts of the city, where the first attack had been mounted, and I saw that that section was all quiet now, except for the merest scattering of fire.

"They've ratted!" said Burke in a hard voice. "They've quit, and just when they should have fought hardest! That's *one* thing Diego Caron never did!"

Time can drag intolerably, or leap forward, when you are watching a spectacle like that. Except that my legs ached from bracing them against the slant of the roof, I had no idea how long we had been there. Below us, the tumult was closer and louder. Little bands of men broke from the mouth of this street and that, faced about to fire, and retreated once more. I saw more than one such band scuttle into the huge, old stone warehouse that stood next to the Costa Brava.

(Continued on page 145)

OOYOO

ILLUSTRATED BY
JOSEPH A. FARREN

The big halfbreed in the oomiak swung his rifle toward the head of the bull walrus.

AND THE CHUCKCHIS

By R. D. HAMILTON

I FIRST heard of Jack Grant two years ago when I was in Nome laying plans for a study of the walrus. The government wanted to set up legislation which would protect both the animals and the natives, who depend on the walrus for food, clothing, boats, and numerous other items. They had accordingly financed a fellowship for a study of the natural history of the big beasts, and their relation to the economy of the Eskimo. I had been interested in the great sea-mammals for some time, and I pulled all the strings I knew, vigorously waving my slender sheaf of scientific papers on walrus behavior and biology in people's faces. Somewhat to my surprise, I got the job. At that, I was probably the best man for it, as no one else had ever undertaken any real scientific studies on the animals.

Anyway, I was looking around for a man to help me in the field, run an oomiak, cook, and prepare skins. I especially wanted someone who was sufficiently interested in what I was doing to

make independent observations when I wasn't around. The natives I had interviewed were all qualified in every respect but the last. Time was pressing, and I was getting moderately discouraged when my friend Jim Case of the U. S. Marshal's office suggested that I fly up to Wales and get hold of Jack Grant. Jack was a bit seclusive, Jim said, and not easy to get to know, but he was much interested in natural history and had been sending specimens Outside to museums for years. Besides, said Jim, a rumor had just filtered through that Jack had recently acquired a pet walrus.

I INQUIRED around among friends and oldtimers about Jack and got a little of his early history. He was supposed to have come to the tundra country because of wife difficulty a number of years before. He had done some mining, a little trapping, and had wandered over most of northern Alaska. He had finally settled down on the Arctic Ocean beach between Wales and Shishmaref. The story went that he had some claims in the Potato Mountains, across Lopp Lagoon, reputedly fairly rich. These, however, he worked only in the summer.

The rest of the year he spent, so far as I could find out, in following up a bent for scientific investigations. He gathered anthropological and ethnological materials from the natives who were great friends of his, trapped and shot birds and mammals, collected and pressed tundra plants, and so on. He paid expenses by selling his material to the large museums of the world. Occasionally he would cruise up the coast to the Kotzebue Sound country, in pursuit of Nanuk, the great white bear, and capture a cub or two for sale to circuses and zoos.

I did a little mental fishing around, then remembered having seen a few articles dealing with northern mammals in the scientific journals over the name John Graves Grant, and figured this must be my man. It all sounded very good, except for the item about Jack's working his claims in the summer. I wanted a man for the late spring and early summer to follow the walrus north on their migration, and again in the late summer to follow them as they swung out across the Arctic Ocean preparatory to coming south.

I ran into my bush-pilot friend, Bill Williamson, at the Nome Grill that noon. Casual talk revealed that he was making a flight to Wales with medicines and mails and on to Shishmaref to pick up an ailing miner for the Nome hospital. I decided to take the opportunity to see Grant and talk with him, and I quickly arranged with Bill to ride the co-pilot's seat.

It was a good day and we had an uneventful flight up the coast, over Port Clarence and Point Spencer, and down the York Mountains to Wales. We could see Siberia clearly across Bering Straits and the Diomedes in their middle as we circled in and landed on the beach. We climbed from the Stinson and walked across the plank bridge to the other half of Wales village. At the native store, we found Jack, smoking with some of the Eskimos. Bill introduced me, then tactfully wandered out to talk to the weather observer.

I mentioned to Jack that I was from the museum of Midwestern University and that I had read several of his papers. He was interested, and we got to talking about walrus and other animals, including the human. Jack had conducted an extensive correspondence with various curators in connection with the specimens he had sold, and he had a burning curiosity about these friends of the mails. I knew most of them personally, and we soon were on good terms with each other, especially since we had a number of interests in common. Jack had many of the reticences and suspicions of men who live much alone, but since I understood these, I steered around them as much as possible. After an hour or two of talk, Jack suddenly said, "Come on down to my camp. I've got something that will interest you."

We walked down the beach to Jack's tent and he led me to his oomiak. The boat had two feet of water in it, and Jack pointed proudly to a brownish heap at one end.

"Meet Ooyoo," he said.

The heap stirred and raised its head,

and I found myself looking into the melting eyes of a baby walrus, a little less than three feet long, with the broad whiskery muzzle of his kind, but no tusks. Jack hoisted him from the oomiak and carried him towards the surf, talking as he went.

"Got him from some Point Hope natives a week ago," he said. "He ought to be a prize for some zoo, if I decide to sell him. Don't know as I will for awhile yet. He's a friendly little chap."

He dumped Ooyoo into the surf, and rolled him unceremoniously onto his back, standing knee deep in the icy water. He scratched the little fellow's belly, slapped him gently, turned him right side up, and splashed water in his face. Ooyoo paddled feebly as the waves lifted him and uttered a sort of barking squeal of pure bliss. Jack kept up a running fire of commentary to me.

"Little devil can't swim too well yet. Their mothers carry them on their backs on the long hauls at first. Listen to him bark! That's where he gets his name. Eskimo for walrus comes from that bark, differs slightly in different dialects. Awuk, Aiviuk, they say over east. Around here it's Ooyoo-wahk, Ooyoo for short."

Very little is known about the breeding of the walrus and the birth and growth of the young, so I recognized in Ooyoo a fine opportunity for research. Jack was amiable about it, and let me measure and weigh to my heart's content. He also provided me with a constant stream of information garnered from his years of experience and contact with the natives. I knew that walrus live almost entirely on clams, but was surprised to learn from Jack that they sometimes turn cannibal, with rogue males becoming a menace to their kind, just like elephants. Fish were eaten also when available, Jack said. Ooyoo seemed to be thriving on a diet of salmon boiled in Klim, powdered milk.

"I'm waiting till he learns to swim a little better," he remarked, "to see if he'll instinctively find clams for himself."

I broached the idea of Jack's working with me for the summer to him. He regretfully shook his head. He had hit some rich pockets in his claims, and he wanted to get them cleaned out before fall. However, he promised, since I was coming up the next year, he would be willing to plan ahead to work with me then. Meantime he recommended to me one Frank Oquillok, a native who had assisted him on scientific forays of his own.

WHEN Bill and I flew on up the beach to Shishmaref late in the afternoon, I carried with me a warm invitation from Jack to visit his cabin and watch Ooyoo grow, as opportunity permitted during the summer. "I've got a sixteen-inch walrus fetus I got from the Diomedes, too," he said. "Come and have a look at it. I'd let you have it, but it's already sold to the New York Museum."

Back in Nome, I hired Oquillok. In his oomiak we cruised through fog and rain, following the northward swimming walrus past Point Lay, to Icy Cape and Wainwright. Here the females and young gathered in the vicinity of the Sea-horse Islands. I lingered with them awhile and got some valuable data on the raising and training of the young. Then I flew on to Point Barrow, for the big bulls swim on farther north than the females and young.

At Barrow I joined the natives in their hunts along the edge of the ice pack, now as far north as it would retreat. We had some exciting times with the enormous beasts. Many times they charged us while we paddled hastily for a floe, leaped out, and snatched the oomiak from the water. The baffled bulls would patrol the ice face roaring and rearing up out of the water, occasionally breaking pieces from the floe edge. We always tried to kill them on the ice where we could cut them up in safety.

Eventually, our besiegers would tire and leave us, and we would load a ton of meat into the oomiak and paddle home, weary but content, to feast. Spare meat went into caves in the frozen ground to keep for winter and time of famine.

I got some magnificent motion pictures and picked up a fine tusk or two for personal souvenirs. Then, on a chilly day with a hint of frost in the air, I flew back down to Wales. A day later I

caught an oomiak ride up the coast and stepped ashore near Jack's cabin. Jack sauntered towards me across the beach, grinning a welcome, and led me to Ooyoo, comfortably relaxed in a tundra pool.

I spent three days with the pair, drinking in Jack's Arctic lore. He told of titanic battles between walrus and polar bear, when Nanuk, otherwise king of the frozen seas, was tusked apart in spite of his great arms and claws and swimming ability. Oomiaks were overturned and men died under the mighty teeth in Jack's descriptions of the hunts.

Ooyoo now, at the end of August, was nearly four feet long, and weighed close to 130 pounds. His tiny tusks were sprouting, but not quite beyond his lips. The walrus was on the friendliest of terms with Jack and seemed to be a most intelligent pet. He would pull his weight up to Jack at intervals during the day, puffing and blowing, to be scratched and patted and played with.

Besides stories of the walrus, Jack regaled me with tales of the Eskimo. He was a keen student of native history, and said that he had found an ancient village site a few miles up the beach. He intended to work it over that fall, as his mining opportunities permitted. He was a bit mysterious about the latter, and I deduced that his pockets had proved richer even than he had thought.

At the end of my three days I regretfully bade Jack and Ooyoo good-bye. I wanted to see the walrus circle in advance of the southward moving ice-pack of fall, preparatory to their migration back into the Bering Sea along the coast of Asia, and I had made arrangements for a cruise into Siberian waters. The season was drawing to a close, and I would have to move fast to be back in Nome in time to catch my plane for Outside.

I wrote several letters to Jack that winter, and sent a Christmas box, including several cans of clams for Ooyoo, but got only one answer. This was one more than I had expected, however. Mails are infrequent in Northwest Alaska in winter, outside of Nome which has PAA service twice a week. Jack was hardly the type to write unless he had something definite to say, anyway.

Ooyoo, said his letter, was getting along fine, still on a diet of Klim and boiled fish. He had a bit less blubber on him than Jack liked, though. Also, he probably wasn't getting enough exercise, since fighting through snow-drifts was the best substitute Jack could offer for an invigorating ocean plunge among the floes. However, all things considered, Jack thought both man and walrus would pull through in good shape, and he looked forward to seeing me in the spring.

CHAPTER II

HOT GOLD

IN MAY I put the finishing touches to my paper on the previous year's researches and sent it off to the printer, plentifully illustrated with shots of Ooyoo and his wild brethren. That done, I gathered my gear and caught a plane. I landed in Fairbanks one day, Nome the next, and hired Bill Williamson on the spot. At five o'clock that afternoon Bill set me down on the beach by Jack's cabin.

Bill is a good egg and a close friend of Jack's, and we all three spent the shank of the evening reminiscing and telling tall tales. Ooyoo was nowhere around, and I waited patiently for Jack to explain. He let me stew for awhile, then grinned at me when I, surreptitiously I thought, peeked out the door and reconnoitered the tundra pools. "Looking for Ooyoo?" he asked, "He's a big boy now and goes out swimming every day. Don't have to feed him any more. He took to clams on his own, right after ice went out."

Late that evening I heard a groaning and thumping, and went out to see Ooyoo hauling himself across the beach from the sea. I hardly recognized him, with his three-inch tusks and heavy body, now far too big for any scales I had.

He pulled himself past Bill and me and laid his wet head alongside Jack's leg. Jack cuffed him affectionately and said, "High time you were coming home, you rascal!" Ooyoo moaned with pure joy and stretched out flat, contentedly.

The rest of our conversation that eve-

ning was punctuated with groans and moans and sobbings of bliss from Ooyoo as Jack leaned over every few minutes to scratch or pat him. I remarked, casually, at one such moment, "I bet you could get two thousand for him from the circus, Jack. Better sell him before he gets too big to ship."

It was evident that the idea had long since gone from Jack's mind. "Sell Ooyoo?" He jerked up his head in sheer disbelief of what he had heard, and caught my wink to Bill. He improvised. "Oh, I could get five thousand easy, but he's worth more than that to me in winter. Stove goes out sometimes nights, and a man sleeping alone would freeze to death."

Later in the evening Jack kept hinting mysteriously that he had something to show us. When he had gotten the demonstration of curiosity he felt the situation demanded, he went down on his knees and pried under one of the floor boards. Like most old-time Alaskans, he distrusted banks, and had a totally erroneous idea that no one would ever think of looking under the floorboards of his cabin for hoarded treasure. He had several bottles full of nuggets and dust, and these he laid on the floor beside him, then reached into the hole and pulled out something heavy wrapped in cloth. He carried the package to the table, ostentatiously concealing its contents from us, then threw back the wrappings, and declared dramatically, "Look at that!"

"That" was a lump of yellow metal that made me gasp. I lack the gold fever which makes so many Alaskans spend their lives mucking in icy creeks, usually for small rewards, but this was gold as few men have seen it. I recalled the famous 185 ounce Nome Nugget, of which one hears but fails to realize in its actual impressiveness.

"Not bad, eh?" chuckled Jack. "That's 157 ounces, darned near ten pounds of gold all in one lump. Found her in one of my pockets last fall. I did right well in the others too. Got nearly seventy pounds of gold here."

Bill wanted to know what he was going to do with it. "Keep it till I need it, if ever," said Jack.

"Better let me fly it into Nome and put it in the bank," answered Bill. "Murder's been done for a lot less than that."

Jack scoffed. "Not out here," he said, "Who's to take it? Nobody in these parts except the natives, the weather observer at Wales, and the schoolteachers at Shish and out on Diomede. And if it was taken, what then? Where could anybody go with it? Jim Case and the other boys in the marshal's office know I've got it and would take care of any boys breezing in from this way with a pile of nuggets." He snorted, "Why the only people likely to want to lift it are all down in Nome. It's a lot safer here than there. Besides, I haven't gotten rightly used to that much gold in one piece yet, and I have to pull it out and look at it every once in awhile."

It's true that natives never bother much with gold. I have known Eskimos to work in the mining camps as laborers, but never heard of one prospecting on his own, or much interested in gold at all. Though they have carved ivory for years, the natives have never done any artistic work of any sort in gold. For the rest, Jack was a good shot, and as he said, no one having stolen the gold, assuming the presence of a dishonest man in the country, could use it.

Bill pulled out for Nome again late that evening, grumbling about Jack's carelessness until the last moment when his plane motor roared, and he flew off under the midnight sun.

Not for about a week yet would the first of the walrus be funnelling through the Straits. Our equipment took less than a day to pack, so we spent the time hiking the beaches. We hunted out mammoth remains, examined Jack's old village site, and talked over the migration waves of animals and humans that have crossed the Straits from Asia to America.

Jack told me stories of the sort I had heard before around Fairbanks, of gold dredges uncovering completely frozen animals, like small horses, but with three toes. These, invariably, in the stories, are a five days' wonder around the camps. Somebody always suggests that they ought to go to a museum, but inertia and ignorance win the day, and they go onto the garbage heap to decay

and molder away. How many of these yarns are the apocryphal tales of some miner with a little education and a big imagination, it's hard to say, but I for one confidently expect that when the fossil-hunters ultimately get around to working Alaska, they'll find plenty to startle them.

All the area around Wales and north to Kotzebue Sound is of course the former land-bridge between North America and Asia. In ancient times the ancestors of our Indians, and many animals, some now extinct, are supposed to have crossed the bridge from Asia to the Americas. It was enthralling for men of our bent to walk over the country, imagining the herds which once had grazed here, the strange animals in them, and the primitive men who had hunted them.

JACK had never had the luck to find a complete mammoth, but he showed me various bones of the animals in the tundra banks. He planned to dig some of these out at the first opportunity. What lay behind in the icy muck might be more exciting.

From digging for ancient animals, we got onto digging for ancient man. On a bright sunny morning, unusual for the Straits' country, we walked up to the early village site Jack had found to do some exploring. We found some old ivory harpoon points, but were careful not to disturb things much. Jack hoped to persuade the National Museum to send an expedition to do the thing properly.

I know very little about the early Eskimo and pre-Eskimo cultures, but they were one of Jack's chief interests. He spent his winters reading up on them in scientific papers and books, and he was always gathering legends and stories from the natives. He held forth at length to me on the subject now.

Like many men who live alone a good bit and have leisure to think, he had a good imagination and was able to describe the things he imagined. My hair fairly stood on end at some of his stories of the old Chuckchi forays across the Straits from Siberia. The Siberians used to raid the Eskimo camps on our side for women and boats. Shishmaref and Wales, he said, had been Eskimo camping spots from time immemorial. Here traditions of the long bloody struggles under the midnight sun when the men thrust and stabbed with seal harpoons and the sand ran red could yet be heard from the older Eskimos. Some of them had even taken part in such, for it is not so many years since they ended.

I lounged on the beach, leaning against a half-buried whale skull, looking off towards Siberia over the Arctic Ocean. Cerulean blue under the sun, with little frothy white caps running over its surface, I could imagine it gray and brooding, with swift skinboats skimming in from over yonder, and the half-exultant, half-wailing cry from the men and women on the shore when the boats were sighted. Then the fierce struggle in the surf and the panting men surging up and down the beach.

"Do they never come nowadays?' I asked Jack.

"Rarely and peaceably," he answered. "After so many years of women-raids both sides are closely related now. There would be considerable trade between them, except the Soviets discourage travel either way. The natives come anyhow, of course, occasionally. Politics are nothing to them." He paused and gazed reflectively eastward for a minute. "I'm beginning to think lately that politics have started encouraging them to come over again. There've been more visitors in the last two years than in the previous ten, and I don't like all of them. Usually there's a Russian-Chuckchi half-breed somewhere in the crowd, and I've heard stories of caches raided and cabins robbed. You know as well as I do that no Eskimo over here ever did anything like that. Also, some of those boys carry cameras. I don't turn my back on 'em."

We dug in the sand a little longer, finding vertebrae and ribs, but no more ivory artifacts. The afternoon turned gray and chilly with wisps of fog drifting in from the sea, and we packed up our tools. Ooyoo played alongside in the waves offshore as we walked back along the beach to the cabin.

Before we had gotten halfway back the fog was all about us. It was with a start of surprise, therefore, that we came on

a strange oomiak lying on the beach near the cabin. "Speaking of Siberians, you should see some now," said Jack. "That's an unmarked oomiak. All our native skin-boats bear registry numbers since the war. Look at that outboard, too."

The outboard motor, set in a well in the center of the boat, was of a different type from our American ones. It lacked the streamlining our manufacturers apply in the most useless places. Square and bulky, it looked awkward but efficient. I hunted for the manufacturer's name and found Russian characters.

We walked on up to the cabin. As it loomed out of the fog, a figure standing by the doorway jumped and let out a startled grunt. Another man appeared in the cabin door, looked at us expressionlessly, then stepped out. Four others followed him. Jack said something to them in Eskimo, and one answered. My Eskimo consists of only a few animal and bird names, so Jack turned to me and translated. "They're from East Cape," he said, jerking his chin towards the tip of Siberia to the west, "going into Nome. Don't say why."

Most of the men were typical Eskimo types, dressed in parkas, seal-skin trousers, and mukluks. The mukluks were a slightly different type than those commonly found on the American coast, but there was nothing more unusual about the group than in natives from any unfamiliar tribe.

ONE of the men, however, was the biggest man I had ever seen among the short natives. He stood about five feet nine or ten, and had light yellowish skin, evidently a mixed blood. The combination of Slav and Eskimo, two broad-faced races, had given him enormous cheek and jawbones. Heavy ridges of muscle ran up to the sides of his head. He looked eminently capable of biting a man's hand off. Unlike the others, who had the noncommittal childlike faces of natives almost anywhere, there was a kind of cunning awareness in his face. Unlike the full-bloods, also, he wore a pair of coveralls over a heavy woolen jacket. Heavy chested, broad shouldered, he was not a type to trust or like.

"Ask them if they have any ivory to trade," I asked Jack. I had long wanted some Siberian carved ivory to add to my collection. The half-breed answered me direct, "No got ivory," he said, "not to trade. We go Nome, trade in stores. G'bye."

He spoke a sharp command to his companions, then strode off towards the foreign oomiak. The others trailed behind him. Their abrupt departure, coupled with the in-pressing fog, made the visit seem unreal.

"Well, that was short and sweet," I said in faint surprise. Jack was looking serious. "I don't like it," he said. "First time a native party past here didn't spend half a day at least. They usually expect you to feed them, and hang around till you offer something."

He went into the cabin. A muffled exclamation floated out the door, and I stepped over the threshold. The cabin was in something of a mess, not badly so, but enough to make it clear that Jack's clothes, books, food and other things had been pawed over. Jack picked up his rifle, looking angry, and started out the door. The sound of a catching outboard came drifting through the fog, and he shook his fist at the damp grayness in impotent wrath. He turned back in, lifted and swung aside the plank of his floor-board safe, and looked in.

"O.K.?" I asked, though I could tell by the relaxing of his shoulders that the gold was still there.

"All there," he replied. "But I'm glad we got back when we did." He looked into the hole again, frowning. "Seems to me that I put the bottles in a little differently last time." He hmm-ed to himself. "Oh, well, it's all there."

We prepared dinner in a thoughtful silence which lasted till we pushed back our plates at the end of the meal. Stomachs full, we felt more cheerful. After Jack said with a grin, "Well, that's what I meant about turning your back on a half-breed," we put the incident behind us. Ooyoo, who had been visibly depressed by our silence, brightened up and came lolloping comically forward at the sound of his master's voice, to be scratched and patted in the usual after dinner wrestling match the two pulled off.

We had a good season among the walrus herds, following them closely. Ooyoo disported himself behind the oomiak, making friends with the great beasts of his kind. Frequently we couldn't tell which of the many heads in sight belonged to Jack's pet, though Ooyoo would usually come splashing up when Jack called out his name. Sometimes, however, he would be missing for two or three days. I was pleased at his ready adjustment to life with his own, for I had expressed my belief to Jack that it would be unwise to keep him at the cabin another winter. Walrus are not made for land locomotion, and the big males especially frequently injure themselves hauling out on ice and land. Ooyoo was getting heavy enough to run this risk, and I thought he should be encouraged to go south with the herds in the fall.

Jack agreed with me on the mechanical principles, but was unhappy at the idea of a lonely winter without his pet. He had come to depend on the walrus for companionship more than he suspected. Unlike a man, the animal never interfered with his reveries and researches, and was always at hand and in the mood for a romp when he was.

Jack picked up his rifle, looking angry, and started out the door. The sound of a catching outboard came drifting through the fog.

I pointed out that Ooyoo would probably return each year to his old home. Somewhat mournfully, Jack agreed that it would be best to let him go in the fall. How to get Ooyoo to leave if he was not receptive to the idea was a problem which bothered us a good deal, however.

We estimated that summer that the Alaskan natives kill between 1000 and 1500 walrus per year, not at all a bad score, considering that in the old days whalers used to take as many as 12,000 in the same length of time. The natives, however, shot the animals indiscriminately whenever they hauled up on land. This tended to make them shy and to keep them away from the vicinity of the older villages. The whalers had taken them mostly out in the open sea with no such ill effects.

Jack and I spent much of our time persuading the Eskimos to hold off killing animals on land. We wanted them to do their hunting at sea until the walrus could establish themselves on the beaches for a year or two. Then, instead of shooting indiscriminately, if they would allot a given number per man, according to his needs, the survivors would probably come back year after year.

The Siberian natives have been recorded as practicing this sort of crude conservation policy, and we had no trouble getting promises from the Eskimos, especially since Jack was so influential among them. In a barren land, however, it is difficult for anyone to voluntarily limit himself when there is food in sight. It remained for another year to show how the natives would keep their promises.

Ooyoo came back to Nome with us that fall, but refused to follow us in through the Snake River jetties. At my last glimpse of him he was rearing and snorting a quarter of a mile offshore, obviously worried by the lighters and tugs chugging in and out between town and the two steamers in the road stead.

I had already stored most of my equipment with Jack, so had only to walk over the bridge to the airfield, and wait till my plane took off an hour later. Jack waited with me and I repeated my advice to him to let Ooyoo go if he would.

CHAPTER III

OFF TO SIBERIA

I GOT a letter in November saying that Ooyoo had gone south with the last of the herds through the Straits before the ice blocked them. He had needed a little urging, said the letter, but not much. Reading between the lines, it was plain that Jack missed his pet and was worried as to whether he would return.

I got six letters from Jack that winter, so I know he was really lonely. All of them were full of stories of Ooyoo. Jack wanted scientific reassurance that he would necessarily come north with the rest of his kind. For the rest, very little is known of the intelligence of the walrus, and no one could say for sure if he would retain any memory of Jack and his old home.

I heard of Jack in other ways over the winter. The Nome Nugget, farthest north newspaper, had gotten hold of the story of Jack's nugget, second only to the paper's namesake in Alaskan gold annals. From Nome the story had gone forth to one of the major wire services. I found the story of Jack and his claims, and the Wales Nugget, so-called, spread over the Sunday feature pages of my home-town newspapers.

The stories made Jack sound like an ignorant, long-bearded, bath-a-year man, instead of a hardworking mining man and correspondent of the big museums. The weight of the nugget was variously misrepresented by several ounces or several pounds, and Alaska was described as a country of towering pines and deep snows, thickly strewn with gold dust and nuggets. None of this is true of Jack's area, although in various other localities of the enormous territory you may find one or more of these things, though rarely together.

In view of Jack's prejudice against banks, I didn't like all this publicity of his hoard. I sent him as stiff a letter as I dared suggesting he deposit it in the Merchant and Miner's Bank in Nome. He didn't answer that part of the letter, and I let the matter drop until I could see him.

I flew into Nome early that year, for I wanted to catch the walrus at the very beginning of their northward migration. I had chartered a trading boat the previous fall and arranged to take a trip over to the Asiatic coast where the walrus winter. Jack would join me at the conclusion of the trip.

The ice had broken just enough to permit the boat to work its way painfully across the Bering Sea. We picked up the herds south of St. Lawrence Island, and followed them up to King Island. No one had ever studied them so early in the year, and I got a lot of new data on their breeding habits.

At King Island, we put back for Nome, where I planned to hire Bill Williamson to fly me up to Wales. At the Straits, I would pick up Jack and the walrus herds once more. I wondered if any of the herds I had seen had contained Ooyoo. None of the animals had shown any sign of friendliness.

Back in Nome, I was walking up Front Street when my friend Jim Case, deputy U. S. Marshal, called to me from the post office building. I went over, and he invited me to walk up the west beach with him to visit a Chuckchi camp. "Some Siberians came in yesterday afternoon," he said, "Get your camera and come along."

It was a nice sunny day, so I loaded my camera with color film and we set off across the Snake River flats. At the camp we found the Siberians sullen and unwilling to speak to us. Evidently they feared the badge on Jim's shirt. We got a half-breed girl to interpret for us, and tried to bargain for some ivory, but they said they had none. When it became clear that we meant them no harm, they thawed somewhat and let us take pictures. Not all of them were at the camp, and while we were snapping photographs these others returned. At their head I recognized the big half-breed I had seen at Jack's cabin the previous year. He did not seem to remember me, but when he saw our cameras, he came shouldering up through the smaller natives. "No picture, no picture," he said, eyes glittering.

Jim looked him up and down, turned calmly, and snapped the shot he had been preparing to take. The half-breed turned a face like a thundercloud on his companions, and they all melted back into their tent, refusing to come out again while we were there.

We examined the camp for a few moments, spotting two of the awkward looking Russian-made outboard motors I had seen before. A Diomede native who had overheard us requesting ivory came up then with a handful of carved seals and walruses. We went off with him to his tent to bargain, leaving the half-breed scowling after us.

"Hard-looking boy, there," I commented to Jim as we headed back for town. "He's the one I told you about at Jack's camp last year."

Jim responded somewhat bitterly. "Yes, they come over here without hindrance, wander all over town, camp next to the air-base, do as they please. None from our side go over there you bet. The few who have in recent years haven't come back. Nothing I can do about it though, if they behave."

WALES reported clear skies that afternoon, and Bill and I drove out to the small plane field and took off. As we passed King Island we picked up the walrus herd. From the Island to Point Spencer and beyond, the sea was dotted with the animals swimming earnestly northwards. A few of the vanguard had reached Wales, but I saw only two beyond the Straits.

Bill put me on the beach and took off again immediately, having business in Shishmaref and Teller. I hiked over to Jack's cabin and found the place empty. There was a note on the table—*"Steve, if you get in, wait for me. I think I've found a new site of the Old Bering Sea culture!"* I sat down with a volume of the Journal of Mammalogy and waited out the afternoon with frequent trips to search the beach and sea.

Early in the evening I heard the roar of an outboard motor, and I walked down to the beach in time to help Jack pull up his oomiak. He was not demonstrative ordinarily except for his grin, but this time he slapped me on the back and dived into the oomiak. "Look what I've got," he grinned, eyes shining. He held out a handful of the usual ivory

artifacts, but one was different. I picked it up, examined it closely. "It's metal!" I said.

"Right," said Jack. "You know what that means? The men of the Old Bering Sea must have got that from southern Asia or western Europe somehow. Think of it, the trades and deals and finagling by which that piece of metal came across the Old World and over the Straits to North America. Right there is the final proof that the natives of North and South America are derived from Asiatics, and I found it."

I grinned, thinking how much more excited he was over this rusty piece of old iron spear-head than over his big nugget.

We ate a hasty supper, carelessly thrown together by Jack in his exuberance. Tossing some equipment into the oomiak, we set off to trace out the site. By the purplish rays of the midnight sun we ran down the boundaries of the ancient village, now indicated only by slightly different colored patches of earth where skin huts had stood. Jack was busy staking out promising areas for digging. "The National Museum boys will be up again when they hear about this," he said. "This is what they hoped for when they dug back of Wales three years ago."

We worked till our bones and muscles cried for sleep, then crawled into our sleeping bags and slept until awakening. At it again by late afternoon of the next day, we had staked out what we thought was the entire village. We photographed it from various angles, then posted signs claiming it as government property. The excavation we thought it wise to leave for trained personnel.

"You know," said Jack, whose enthusiasm for ancient pre-Eskimo cultures has always exceeded mine, "this sort of thing makes you wish you knew more about it all. I've always wanted to meet your friends back in the museums, and I've been planning a trip Outside for some time. I've got enough of a stake now that I think I'll make it a long one and do some work at the University on this stuff." He grinned. "Might even marry one of those little coeds."

"Good idea," I approved. "Be nice to have you at Midwestern. We've a good anthropology department there."

We went over the site again, searching carefully for any artifacts on the surface which might be damaged or washed away by bad weather. We found none, and headed for the oomiak. "Back to the walrus," said I. "Seen Ooyoo yet this year?"

"Not yet," said Jack, "First walrus of the season went past only two days ago. Main herd'll be here today or tomorrow."

We cruised slowly along through the leads in the ice, enjoying the scenery. It was a clear, bright day, slightly hazy, and all around us lay the myriad manifestations of the ice pack. Old sea ice, new sea ice, much ice, and snow crystals gleamed and glittered, blue and green and white. Water displaced by our passage splashed and slapped on the sides of floes and bergs. We zig-zagged along keeping an eye out for seal and walrus on the floes, and with some hopes of a polar bear, though they are rare south of Cape Espenberg.

Far down the beach Jack's cabin came into view. Across the beach from it lay a large dark object. "Ooyoo?" I thought. I dug out my binoculars. Although the movements of the boat made it difficult to focus exactly, I could see that the object was not a walrus, but an oomiak. I swung the glasses onto the cabin. As I did so a figure stepped out of the door and looked straight at me, or so it seemed in the lens.

Our boat caromed off a floe, and the figure bounced out of view. When I picked it up again there were four others with it. All five were running across the beach towards the oomiak. They had the short-legged gait of the native, and as they turned their skin boat around and launched it, I saw that it had unpainted sides.

"Hey, Jack, something funny going on down there," I said. "Hit it up!"

"Let's see," said Jack. I handed him the glasses and took over the motor, steering as deftly as I could through the ice. How Jack saw anything I don't know, for I had good cause to appreciate his smooth steering skill as I banged and bumped my way through the leads.

Jack grunted, then took over the motor again. It roared with a new tempo, and we began to race swiftly along between the floes.

The unpainted skin boat up ahead pulled away from shore. Her motor caught with a roar, followed in a moment by another. "Two motors," shouted Jack. "If they've been up to what I think they have, let's hope we can catch 'em."

I am long-legged, and used to be a runner in college, so when we pulled up near shore I leaped out and ran full tilt for the cabin. A glance showed that Jack's floor board safe had been forced and the gold taken. I snatched my rifle from behind the door and raced back across the beach. Jack had his gun in the boat. He was already swinging the oomiak's nose westward as I jumped inboard. He glanced at me questioningly. "Gone?" "Gone! Let's go!"

CHAPTER IV

WALRUS CHARGE

WE roared out to sea, southwest for Siberia. The fugitives' oomiak was larger than ours and rode higher in the water. Jack is a better than first-class hand at steering through an ice field, however, and we had good fortune with leads. Also the breeze, a few points off a head wind, delayed the higher riding boat more than ours. It was obvious that we were pretty closely matched and that luck and good seamanship would determine the finish.

I kept hoping for a shot at the boat ahead, but bergs and tilted floes obscured my aim time after time. The distance was too great for accurate shooting from a racing boat, and though I kept aiming at the fugitives, I always held my fire. I had only about ten rounds of ammunition with me, and didn't know what might come. After awhile I put the rifle down and used my glasses on the boat in hopes of outguessing her maneuvers.

Occasionally the man in the stern of the foreign oomiak stood up to keep track of us. He was a big fellow, and I had my suspicions as to who he might be. Except for the roar of the motor, we raced along in silence. Every so often Jack would yell warningly at me, point the nose of our omiak at a floe and drive straight at it. I would leap out, half-pull, half-steer the bow up and over the mush ice, and we would slide over into a lead on the far side, having gained a few seconds. As far as the eye could see the ice fields stretched, marred only by the tiny groups of humans intent on their little passions.

Our quarry lost a little, avoiding a lead which closed before him, but opened for us. Next time he stood up he had a rifle in his hands. I didn't see the shot among the ice, but it missed us comfortably. Our oomiak was quivering and shaking like a restive horse under the drive of the motor. With two outboards on his boat, he had only a small chance of hitting us.

Off to the left the Diomedes came in sight, paired rocky cliffs upending sheer from the sparkling ice-sea. Over ahead East Cape loomed, tip of Siberia. Almost immediately we spotted walrus heads among the ice, and here and there a bowhead whale arched his back in some narrow lead. Most of the walrus were large, and I knew that it was the vanguard of bulls.

Our quarry swung south around a swimming herd, bringing the animals between us. We edged into them, the startled beasts rising and rearing all around us. I hoped that none of them would hook his tusks over our gunwale and overturn us, in the time-honored attack of walrus. Tusks aside, no human could live in these freezing waters for more than a few minutes. The animals were more startled than angry, however, and they tended to avoid us.

By now the whole sea was thick with plunging walrus. Once the mass of the herd starts funnelling through the narrow Straits, the passage may be jammed with them for several days. We had to throttle down our speed to prevent collisions with them. So did the Siberians, we noted with satisfaction. With little way on, their larger boat maneuvered more awkwardly than ours, and we were gaining slowly.

I turned my glasses momentarily on the heavy heads and gleaming tusks, searching for Ooyoo. "Call for your walrus," I said to Jack. "Maybe he's in earshot." Jack turned to shout down the northerly breeze, and called, "Ooyoo, Ooyoo!" He repeated it twice.

None of the beasts near us paid any attention. I was scanning those farther away when I heard a shot and instinctively ducked, but we were not the target this time.

We were close enough to the Siberians now to see them clearly without glasses, and I abandoned the binoculars with a sigh of relief. It had been a strain trying to see through them in our rocking, quivering boat.

Up ahead the half-breed had become impatient at the slow pace through the walrus and had begun shooting at them angrily. I saw one bull give a stricken leap as the rifle cracked. Around the boat the water boiled in turmoil as the others dived for safety.

A moment later the panic-stricken rush changed, and I clenched my fist exultantly as I realized our enemy's tactical error. Belligerent bulls were rearing around the oomiak ahead, roaring, trying to hook their tusks over its side. I saw the boat jump as one bull came up beneath it. The half-breed staggered and clutched the gunwales. As the boat slid off the broad back, he pointed his rifle with one hand and the bull jerked back from the muzzle blast.

Forward movement had practically ceased in the unmarked boat. Our own pace had slowed to a crawl, but we were creeping in as close as we dared among the angry herd. Finally, Jack cut our motor, and we pulled the boat halfway up on a floe.

There was a breathing space for a moment up ahead, and our quarry also headed for shelter on the ice. As they turned towards a big pan, I looked wildly around for some cover. They were five to our two, and the open floe was no place for us. I had just given up hope, and started aiming at the man by the rear motor when Jack clutched my arm and roared out, "Ooyoo!"

How he recognized the animal, I'll never know, though he claims his pet was unmistakable. Anyway, a big young bull walrus started swimming vigorously towards us through a lead about seventy yards off. His course took him diagonally towards the Siberian oomiak, and I held my breath as I saw the big half-breed swing his rifle towards the moving head.

We were close enough now to see the Siberians clearly.

I dropped to one knee, rifle up, but Jack was quicker, and his old carbine roared beside my ear, making me wince. When my ear stopped ringing a little I looked again. Jack is a fine shot, but the moving oomiak was a hard target, and he had fired hastily. The half-breed was still standing, but just under his arm a man was tilting ludicrously off to one side. As I watched he hit the gunwale and slid overboard.

THE big Chuckchi breed turned his rifle from the walrus to us. Fortunately he was still standing, and his broad shoulders made it difficult for the others in the boat to shoot at us. My ear was still ringing, but on my knee I was in a fairly steady position. I squeezed off my .30-'06. The breed dropped his rifle and shook his fingers as though they stung. He fell to his knees, then reached back and snatched at the rifle of the man behind. I levered in another shell and planted a shot

I looked wildly around for some cover. They were five to our two.

square in the chest of the second man, just too late to prevent the transfer of the gun.

Everybody in the boat ahead was down low by now, and I could see convulsive movements as they tried to free themselves of the man I had just dropped. Meanwhile, walrus and boat approached each other. The oomiak motors were still kicking gently, though uncontrolled. As the boat skimmed towards him the walrus reared up from the water, head overhanging the gunwale.

"Good Lord, he thinks it's you," I yelled at Jack. He gripped my arm, and we waited for one paralyzed moment. The half-breed was free of his companion's body now, and he slammed his rifle like a club against the side of Ooyoo's head. The beast was too close for him to fire.

Ooyoo fell back in the water. The boat sheered away from his splash and ran halfway onto an ice-cake, then started to turn on its side. One of the crew fell sprawling on the edge of the ice. He rose and grabbed at the boat as it slid back into the water, missed, and skidded into the sea.

The walrus reared again, and I heard a questioning bark. The big man was far enough back now for a shot, and as Ooyoo's head sank down the rifle roared. I could tell by the way the walrus shuddered that he had been hit. I felt sick. Jack swore beside me, and worked his carbine lever. He had fired one shot and was squeezing on another when the walrus rose again beside the oomiak. This time the tusks hooked purposefully over the side. The breed was shoving his rifle towards us once more. The other native saw their danger. He let out a wild yell, and swung a paddle at Ooyoo. At the shout the leader's shot went wild. As the boat started to tip, he laid down his rifle, turned quickly, and, leaning down, seized Ooyoo's tusks.

The breed heaved upward on the giant teeth, pushing downward with his feet. The light skin-boat rocked out from under the shining tusks. He stooped for his rifle again.

Again the walrus reared and hooked the gunwales, blood streaming from his wounded head. This time the breed put his faith in his rifle once more. He pressed the muzzle against Ooyoo's head. I could see his hand jerk as he snatched at the trigger, but nothing happened. I let my breath out with a sigh as I realized he had forgotten to lever in a new shot. Before he could work the lever now the boat uptilted till water rushed in over its side, and he fell with a mighty splash into the icy sea. The oomiak tilted back upright, though riding deeper from the water in it, the last man clinging tightly to both sides.

Jack pushed our oomiak back into the water, and, with paddles now, we worked our way towards the other boat, moving quickly and cautiously among the rearing, snorting, roaring giants of the sea. Many times the beasts raised their heads around us, but fortunately none hooked

our sides. I was too wrought up to pay a great deal of attention to them, but I somehow had the feeling that we were on the walrus' side this day, and that they knew it.

As the last native raised a shotgun, I noticed a tremendous flurry in the water beside him. I snapped a shot at the Siberian. He dropped the shotgun and clutched at his chest below the shoulder. The waters beside the skin-boat stilled, and the cold green surface turned slowly red. Once more the bloody massive head of a walrus reared out of the water, tusks running crimson.

"Ooyoo," cried Jack, "Ooyoo!" That demonic head turned to us, and as we pulled alongside it, Jack leaned over and grabbed it around the neck, nearly going overboard. "It's Ooyoo," he shouted at me, who needed no telling. Ooyoo pulled a massive gambol under and around our stern. Evidently the half-breed's bullet had no more than glanced off his thick skull.

We bailed out the captured oomiak. Jack's gold was carefully tied to one of the framework poles, wrapped in sealskin. Old hands, the Chuckchis had taken no chances on its being spilled. I clambered aboard our prize, and we lashed the two boats together. I made the wounded captive start one of the Russian motors, and we started back for North America and U.S. soil. Ooyoo was in transports of delight behind us, and I could hardly keep Jack inboard.

We hauled out on the sand finally, boats and Ooyoo. While I marched our prisoner to the cabin, Jack and his walrus held a reunion in the surf.

We anxiously doctored Ooyoo for a day. Then, as he continued well and happy, we piled into the oomiaks again, and ran down the coast to town. In Nome we turned our prisoner over to Jim Case and detailed our story to the marshal. He grumbled loudly at us having brought back only one prisoner, but I think the international aspects troubled him and he was glad to have just one native to deal with.

We had a most successful season with the walrus herds, Jack and Ooyoo making a game of the work all summer. When the herds turned south for the winter it was harder getting rid of Ooyoo than it had been the year before.

Jack came Outside with me that winter. He is studying zoology and anthropology now and has a job awaiting him at the University of Alaska when he gets through. Summers he works with the National Museum men at the site he found, and he makes sure he's always north of Wales by the first week in June. Sometime in the course of that week each year a giant bull walrus with a shiny scar across his muzzle hauls ashore by Jack's cabin. The evolutions he performs with the man on the beach must be a considerable surprise to even the giddiest young cow in his harem.

As for me, I'm waiting to add an appendix to my paper on "The Migration Route of the Pacific Walrus." I know of at least one herd that habitually comes back down the American side in the fall, instead of circling to Siberia, and in a few years Ooyoo's babies will be grown up and doing it too. Scientists being what they are, I hardly think I'll dare set down, however, that this change in the age-old habits of the walrus stems, in part at least, from the acquisitiveness of a half-breed Chuckchi!

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK KRAMER

GHOST-MINE GOLD

By STEVE FRAZEE

He held the black lever like a baseball bat and came on toward Sadar.

THE STORY THUS FAR:

A FOOL'S quest for fool's gold—that's what every oldtimer in Sylvanite calls it when RIGDON SADAR turns up in town to search for a fortune in gold ore which his grandfather, SAM RIGDON, was suspected of stealing forty-five years before. The gold—contained in 27 sacks—disappeared on the night it was to be taken from the Vivandiere Mine—and Sam, as mine superintendent, had been under suspicion ever since. But young Sadar believes the treasure is still there somewhere in the abandoned tunnels of Sylvan Mountain—and he is determined to find it and prove his grandfather's innocence.

In Sylvanite, Sadar meets old man ROUVIERE, millionaire boss of the town and present owner of the closed-down Vivandiere Mine; his

attractive daughter JACKIE; and his manager "BIFF" REEVES—for whom Sadar conceives an instant dislike. DEEDEE DUCRAY, an old miner, takes him to the Fire Horse Club where he meets SIM TARWATER, who worked at the Vivandiere at the time of the robbery; BEN LIGGETT, the club manager; and JACK RALSTON, owner of the Hibernian Mine, next to the Vivandiere. Both Tarwater and Liggett, when they hear of Sadar's mission, warn him to get out of town in a hurry—and their warnings are soon justified by two narrow escapes. On Sadar's first night in town, he is shot at from ambush and next day, as he is exploring the Vivandiere, a mysterious slide traps him in the tunnel for several hours.

Sadar goes to see Tarwater in his little shack on the mountain. The old man drops a hint or two which serve only to complicate the mystery of the vanished gold. Tarwater speaks of an "Injun in the Big Stope" and a "geezer"—but adds that it would take ninety days' hard work to check his theory. With Deedee Ducray, Sadar goes back into the mine. The two men are caught in a flood caused by the collapse of the ancient timbers, but manage to raise themselves above the roaring water—and Sadar escapes death for the third time in as many days.

Back at his hotel, the Big Stope, Sadar recalls Tarwater's first clue and begins a search of the premises. In a dark basement storeroom, he is suddenly challenged by a voice from behind a pile of old packing cases—and finds himself looking into the barrel of an automatic pistol. . .

PART IV

RIGDON SADAR stopped quickly, looking at the pistol pointing at his chest from between the rolls of rugs. His right arm and shoulder tingled as he set himself for a quick upsweeping blow that would knock the gun loose from the hand that held it.

"Don't do it!" said the voice behind the weapon. "Don't get excited and tackle these rugs. I bruise easily."

He recognized the voice then. Jackie Rouviere was hiding in that dusty corner. "What the hell!" Sadar said.

The pistol disappeared. He heard the girl scraping along the wall and presently she came out from behind the last roll, carrying the pistol by the barrel. She ran the back of her other hand along her forehead to remove cobwebs and held the gun toward Sadar. "It needs uncocking or something. I don't remember whether or not I worked that sliding thing on top that pushes a cartridge into the barrel—but I don't think I did."

Sadar took the gun, a .32 automatic, still warm from the grip of her hand. The thumb safety was down. He pulled the slide back and saw a cartridge in the chamber. After he slid the magazine out he ejected the single load and caught it in midair.

He bounced the cartridge in his hand, watching the girl.

"What do you know!" she said. "It *was* loaded."

They looked at each other quietly in the dim light.

"Oh, don't be so grim and dark-looking," Jackie said. "I wasn't going to shoot anybody, I think. But neither did I want to get punched silly if you pulled those rugs aside and saw me before you could control your reflexes."

"Why were you hiding there?"

"My father happens to own this hotel!" She seemed to regret the statement instantly. "I was looking for the same wooden Indian you were."

He glanced at the gun. "Did you think he was going to come to life and go on the warpath?"

"The gun was in case—somebody—tried to get nasty."

"Who?" Sadar asked.

The lower half of her face for an instant was faintly suggestive of her father's jaw and mouth. "That has nothing to do with you."

"The dummy Indian might."

"I don't think so — unless —" She studied him keenly. "My father *did* let you go, didn't he?"

"He fired me, yes. What about the wooden Indian?"

"It's gone. A day or two before you came it was here. I know because I saw it."

Sadar digested the information slowly. From the first that Indian business had seemed fantastic, in spite of the fact that Tarwater had introduced it. The whole thing just didn't seem to have any relation to the calaverite, even though he'd tried to follow up the riddle because it was all he had to work on at the moment. But now, incredible as the whole deal seemed, there must have been sanity in Tarwater's mention of the carved figure. Jackie was after it, and so was someone else, assuming that she really hadn't meant that gun for him.

He looked at her wrists and forearms. It struck him that, for a girl who could kill a deer with an arrow, she had appeared rather helpless and ignorant about a gun. Still, that could be . . .

"Any idea where the big chief went?" he asked.

She nodded.

"Where?"

"About two thousand miles from here."

"Fine!" Sadar muttered with the exasperation that accompanies frustration. "What makes you so sure the Indian has nothing to do with me—unless I'm working for your father?"

"You'll just have to take my word for that," Jackie said. "I assure you that the Indian has nothing at all to do with your blessed calaverite. I'm a little tired of being cross-examined, and of the musty smell in here, so if you'll just give me back Myra's gun and—"

"I'll carry it up for you." Sadar dropped the weapon in his pocket. "Sim Tarwater says different from you about that Indian."

She gave him a startled look. "Sim!"

They heard the stairway door open. The lights went off, then snapped back on and someone started down the wooden steps.

"I'm going to take Biff-Biff back to Sim tomorrow morning," Jackie said quickly in a low voice. "Will you walk over with me?"

He nodded slowly.

She raised her voice. "Now take this rug right here—don't you think it would make a nice floor mat for the jeep?"

"No," Sadar said.

Reeves walked into the room.

His face was smooth; he did a creditable job of pretending polite surprise, but the tightness of his eyes betrayed some raging suspicion.

"Have you seen our antique furniture, Reeves?" Sadar asked. "Some very fine old antediluvian stuff in here." He took Jackie's arm and started for the stairs. "No? Well, take a look, son. All I ask is that you don't forget the lights. Overhead, you know, old boy."

Reeves said nothing. His face was a little pale.

As the couple passed Reeves, Sadar read from the quietness in the red-bearded man's eyes a hatred deeper and more lasting than Ralston would ever be able to work up. Sadar knew that if Jackie hadn't been between the two of them Reeves would have tried to knock him cold.

Before he followed Jackie up the steps Sadar paused and looked back. "The light, old boy—you won't forget?" He sniffed with grotesque delicacy. "I love the perfume in that oil on your beard."

Reeves eyes were almost shut. He didn't speak.

CHAPTER XV

LAST WARNING

SADAR faced the fifth day in Sylvanite with a strange mixture of enthusiasm and doubt. His optimism was inspired by the knowledge that others besides himself were sure the calaverite was still underground. His doubt was based on his experience inside Sylvan Mountain. Looking back he realized how silly his seven-day proposal must have seemed to Tanner, to anyone who knew what the inside of a mine looked like after thirty years of abandonment. He realized that he had known himself, without admitting it, how impossible his seven-day pact was. But he had been fired up then with anger and determination.

Now only the determination was left.

He tried to ignore all the bothersome side trails that stemmed from the main path, inviting though they were: Jackie's unexplained interest in the wooden figure; Ralston's renewal of his association with Rouviere; Ben's warning to Sadar, a cautioning against something that Ben was merely "guessing at." Perhaps all these branching paths led to the main trail, instead of from it, and if one knew all the facts he would find all side-paths contributing to the final answer as tributaries spend themselves to make a river.

The strongest lead he had, and it was dead ahead on the main line, was Tarwater's jumbled story.

Now, as he stood in early morning sunlight in front of the Big Stope, looking at Sylvan Mountain, he wondered if he had made a mistake in changing his

mind yesterday about staying at Sim's cabin until he had Tarwater pinned down and talking coherently. This time, when he went over with Jackie, perhaps it would be best to stay on Tarwater's heels until the one-time Vivandiere shifter spoke clearly, even if he had to wait until after dark, with Chinook prowling outside.

Sadar looked at pink wastepiles fanning from the Hibernian portals. It was early. His date with Jackie was three hours off. He looked at the dead lamps on the wagon wheel.

The second mop closet he tried produced carbide for the lamp he took from the wagon wheel by resting one foot on the window sill and springing out to do his unhooking in midair. Two riders out for an early morning canter observed his feat with mingled admiration and curiosity.

Deedee was standing in his garden when Sadar passed near the shack. He returned the old man's wave and went on toward the dump of Hibernian Number Six.

Four hundred feet beyond the half open door he began to encounter huge sloughs from the roof, cave-ins that left gaping overhead gloom above the range of his light. He climbed over piles of muck, feeling his feet and legs turning blue under cold that clamped his bones in the pools he had to wade.

Before long he reached timber, posts that were askew, water-soaked caps that still held ends of sagged lagging. He went on, careful to keep from touching any of the timber. Here and there posts that no longer held anything leaned against the walls like frozen corpses draped in sheets of ghostly white mold. The air was dead and thick. Only he, the lamp and water that somehow worked its way out were alive.

Where timber had slipped from time-slaked hitches he knew the ground above was probably sound. Where posts and caps still stood in position, he knew that terrible weight was holding them that way.

He went on, scrambling over muck piles twisting and contorting to avoid contact even with timber that leaned harmlessly; until at last he came to a place where he could go no further.

He went back to sunlight.

Number Six was no good. Sunshine warmed his upper parts quickly, worked its alchemy more slowly on his wet legs. He looked up the mountain. The Vivandiere vug had been on Four level; the levels of the two mines rose almost exactly on the same stages. If the thieves had lacked time to move the sacks of calaverite, they couldn't have gone much farther than one level up or down from Four in either mine.

Five Hibernian was down at the portal, he knew. He passed it without going near the dump and went on up to Four. There was no travesty of a door on the entrance, but Ralston's warning notice was fixed there.

Less than a hundred feet from daylight he encountered timber that was a worse jumble than he had found in Six. Though less than seven hundred feet along the mountain from the Vivandiere tunnels, the Hibernian bores had been driven in a loose intrusion of quartzite that required plenty of timbering. He made another hundred feet before admitting that to go farther was worse folly than entering in the first place.

No believer in prescience, Sadar didn't know what made him turn suddenly in the act of shutting off his lamp water after he reached daylight.

JACK RALSTON, his face damply pale, was standing above the portal. The automatic he held was rock-steady.

"I warned you, Sadar!"

Sadar was deliberate when he ignored Ralston and gave attention to his lamp. He finished shutting the water valve. When he looked back at Ralston he realized he had made a mistake.

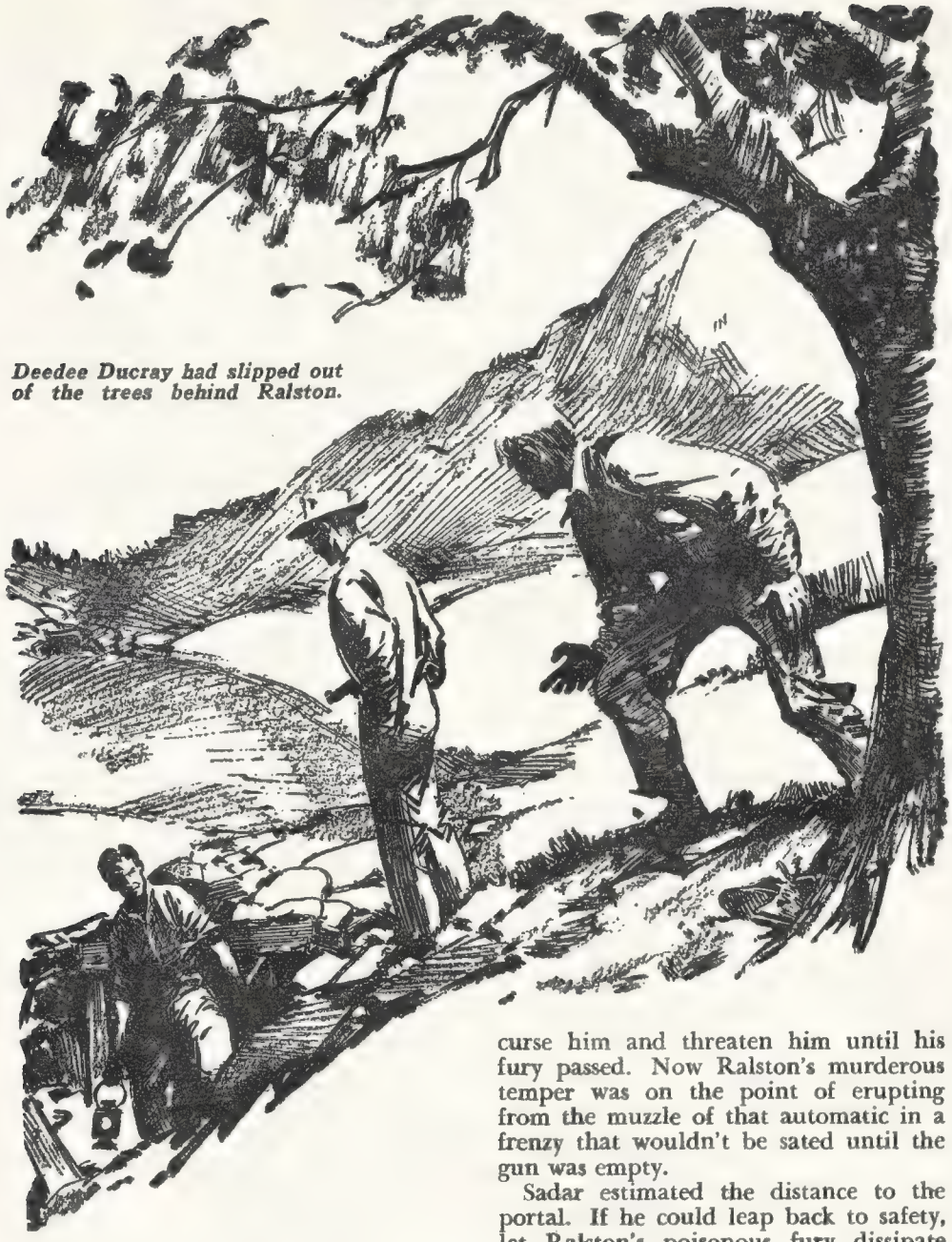
All the man's dangerous temper was on his face.

"How do you think I could hurt your mine?" Sadar asked. "And I'm not scouting for Rouviere, either. He must have told you last night that he fired me."

"You trespassed, after I warned you."

Sadar was warned by the caressing intensity with which Ralston fondled his second verb. He was warned but he laughed. "So I did, Ralston."

He saw the muscles around Ralston's mouth contort in ugly lumps. The man's



Deedee Ducray had slipped out of the trees behind Ralston.

face darkened and his eyes went wide as if he was losing control of himself.

"You saw my signs and trespassed," Ralston said.

Sadar was motionless. He realized with a stomach-twisting shock that he had gone too far, that he should have crawled, shown fear and let Ralston curse him and threaten him until his fury passed. Now Ralston's murderous temper was on the point of erupting from the muzzle of that automatic in a frenzy that wouldn't be sated until the gun was empty.

Sadar estimated the distance to the portal. If he could leap back to safety, let Ralston's poisonous fury dissipate itself through his mouth instead of through the gun . . .

Afterward, Sadar knew he must have done a creditable job of concealing surprise, though now it raced through him like a chill.

Deedee Ducray had slipped out of the trees behind Ralston and was coming

carefully toward the man. Deedee's big hands were before him in wrestler's poise; he was without his shoes; the smooth cap of his gray hair was bright in the sunshine.

"I'm sorry, Ralston—" Sadar tried to hold the man's attention.

The corrosion of Ralston's fury made its decision. His lips twisted and he raised the pistol a trifle. Sadar read Death. He leaped for the portal.

"Jack." Deedee's voice was quiet.

Ralston whirled straight into those big hands.

Sadar heard the struggle and got off his hands and knees in the portal. He ran up the hillside in time to see the pistol drop soundlessly. Ralston's struggles were like the writhing of a crippled ant.

"Don't hurt him!" Deedee grunted as Sadar leaped in to assist.

Ralston's strength was incredible. Then it left him suddenly. There was foam on his lips when they lowered him to the ground. His eyes were open but they didn't see. His jaw was jerking and one side of his face seemed lower than the other.

Deedee was breathing hard. He took a handkerchief from his overalls and dabbed at Ralston's right wrist where the flesh had been twisted away.

"You shouldn't have got him sore!" Deedee accused.

Sadar looked at the contorted face. "I know it now."

"I should have told you. He had St. Vitus dance when he was little and the other kids used to tease him just to see him throw a fit. That's why he can't stand to have anyone laugh at him or cross him—even about some little stinking thing that don't matter."

Sadar felt shamed as he looked at the thin-shouldered man on the ground. He remembered the pitiful defiance that had underlaid Ralston's anger the night the beefy lad had come at him in the Windlass Bucket. He remembered his own boyhood—but he had been strong and could fight back.

"I'm sorry about this," Sadar said.

"I should have told you," Deedee said. His eyes were tired and the bony structure of his chin and cheekbones was more prominent than Sadar had ever seen. "I see you go up the hill with a lamp. Then Jack come along after you quite a while later. I tried to talk him out of trailing after you, but he wouldn't listen. So I just sneaked along to see what I could do."

"Thanks, Deedee."

"I didn't want to see either of you get hurt." There was no denying the sincerity of the old man's voice.

Color was coming back to Ralston's face. His eyes were closed now and he tried feebly to clear his throat.

"He'll be all right," Deedee said. "But maybe you better not be around when he comes to." He nodded back toward the trees above the tunnel. "Would you get my shoes for me before you go?"

The old man's shoes, Sadar noticed, were about worn out.

BACK at the Big Stope Sadar hung the lamp on the wagon wheel with another side leap from the purchase of the window sill. Guests in the lobby looked his muddy condition over critically. He explained it to Mrs. Mahogany as the result of riding a bicycle innertube through the canyon on Tumbling River, and went up to change clothes.

A half hour later he and Jackie were headed up the mountain with Biff-Biff, who persistently tried to pass on the wrong side of trees, tangled his chain around rocks and stumps, or sat down stubbornly in the middle of the bridle path when all other devilment failed to get attention.

"Maybe Dad was right when he said we should have used the jeep to get Biff-Biff back to Sim," Jackie said. "I wouldn't be surprised if he meets us over there to haul us back."

"He doesn't trust me then?"

"As far as the calaverite goes he thinks you're a bad influence around Sylvanite. His attitude toward you personally is something I don't pretend to know. He generally knows what's going on, but he always makes sure before he acts."

"What does that mean?" Sadar asked.

"A lot of things that you wouldn't be much interested in; a few things connected with the wooden Indian."

"I *am* interested in that wooden Indian. Sim was on the verge of telling

me more about it when you and your father scared him to death."

Jackie frowned and shook her head. "You must have misunderstood him." She thought a while. "My gosh! You don't suppose that dummy *did* have something to do with the calaverite?"

Sadar gave her a dark look. "I wonder."

They walked on in silence.

"Of course if it does, it isn't important," Sadar said. "Just a hundred thousand or so in gold, money that goes smack into your old man's pocket, minus ninety-nine per cent for Uncle Sugar, of course."

"You sound a little bitter about that gold."

"I will be if it's never found." He watched her face for several moments, then briefly told the reason why he wanted to find the twenty-seven sacks. "The more I see of bitterness stemming from that vug robbery, the more determined I am to find the gold and shake myself free of the curse of the whole thing. I may go broke trying. I may have to try to lease the Hibernian and the Vivandiere and start from scratch, but I'm going to keep trying."

She nodded. "I suspected something of your feelings when made that crack about your grandfather the other day."

"Now tell me why you promoted me into walking over here with you," Sadar said.

"Maybe to find out just what you've told me. Maybe I can help if I give you some of the facts that Dad's uncle passed on to him about that robbery."

"The first thing I want to know is about the Indian."

She shook her head stubbornly. "I'm sure that has nothing to do with the calaverite, even if Sim did tell you. When we get over there we'll let him prove it."

"All right. Tell me what Ralston's cooking up with your father."

"I'm not sure, but I think it's the same old deal about the Hibernian. Since you came Ralston is more convinced than ever that the calaverite is in a little crosscut or drift or something way back on the fourth level. His reasons, Dad says, are not very sound, but Dad doesn't want to offend him again by turning him down the way he did last time. Ralston just about went crazy that time. He was going to beat Dad to death with a telephone."

"I know all about his temper," Sadar said. "I misjudged it this morning." He told her what had happened.

Biff-Biff surged ahead, deciding to be the dragger instead of the draggee. Order restored, Jackie commented, "That's Deedee for you. He's always trying to help some poor devil out."

"How much do you know about the inside of the mines?" Sadar asked.

"Nothing about the Hibernian. There are no maps of it any more. Jack Ralston's father had them, and he looked for years for the calaverite. He used up what money Jack's grandfather had left after some bad investments that swallowed most of the Hibe's profits. Jack's father didn't have any luck. Then others leased the mine and tried. Finally three men were killed when they started to take out some old timbers to look behind lagging. Jack's father tore the maps up then and swore he'd never have another thing to do with looking for the gold, or let anyone else."

Nothing but violence had spawned from the calaverite, Sadar thought. Nothing but bloodshed and bitterness had come from twenty-seven sacks of highgrade only briefly in anyone's actual possession.

"What do you know about the Vivandiere?" Sadar asked.

"I've gone over the level charts with Dad, and all the records and personal observations Marcus Besse made about the robbery."

"Tell me then: that bulkheaded place on Two, the place where the engine crashed through on its way to the bottom of the stope. How tight was that at the time of the robbery?"

"Like a drum. Marcus Besse's records show that the stope was blocked with four-inch planks from wall to wall. The opening that came up from Number Three had been blocked by cave-ins and bulkheaded off. Dad's uncle had a brother-in-law, a big fat Frenchman, who was a shift boss on Number Two. He spent most of his time sitting in a little shack right on top of the bulkhead. Besse's records show his brother-in-law spent his whole shift the night

the vug was robbed smack-dab in that one place. Then there were trammers, tool nippers and others going back and forth all the time."

THAT would eliminate the theory that the thieves had, somehow, got into the old stope where the engine was, Sadar thought. Well . . . it had been only an idea.

It struck him that those who had searched the mountain forty-five years before had had knowledge far beyond what it would be possible to find now. But they must have missed something, or maybe somebody found the ore and got away with it during the search.

"Did the Vivandiere operate full blast right after the robbery?' he asked.

"Both the Vivandiere and the Hibe shut down for a week. Marcus Besse, Theodore Ralston—that was Jack's grandfather—your grandfather, little Sim and a few other men Besse trusted searched and dug and prodded and did everything to find where the sacks had gone. Then Ralston protested about the loss of time, even if Besse was paying all expenses incurred by the delay, and both mines reopened. But they still kept looking."

Sadar gave Biff-Biff a gentle kick to get him on ahead. "You make it sound hopeless."

"If you'd gone over the records you'd say so too." Jackie paused to fling a stone down the hill like a boy. "My Dad chewed over every bit of information there was and decided finally the possibility that the ore was still underground, or could be recovered if it was, was so poor the whole deal was a bad investment."

Sadar stripped a twig from an aspen and chewed on the bitter leaves. "Somebody besides me doesn't think so."

"The person who tried to trap you for good in the Commander?" she asked quietly. "I have eyes, too," she added when Sadar stared.

He nodded. "Or the person who—" he looked at her wrists and hands, remembering that she could draw a bow to kill a buck deer—"who tried to put a broadhead arrow through me the first night I was in Sylvanite."

She stopped in the trail. Her eyes went wide, so wide they looked more like her father's than he had ever seen.

"Oh, no!" Jackie said.

"Oh yes." He told her scant facts about the incident.

She shook her head soberly. "This is getting to sound like a nasty affair."

They walked on, Sadar deciding that the hoof marks he had been studying in the trail for some time were quite fresh. He unwrapped the chain from around a tree, then unsnarled it from around Biff-Biff.

They climbed toward Tarwater's cabin.

The horse, tied well off the trail in the timber that edged the cabin, had been watching them for some time before they saw it. The man standing behind a tree with a rifle and looking toward the cabin didn't see or hear them until they were quite close.

It was Reeves.

He swung around quickly. Biff-Biff clowned toward him and Sadar let loose of the chain. Reeves stooped and played with the cub for a moment, straightening with a smile, a smile that was for Jackie only. He didn't seem to see Sadar.

"I didn't have enough force to leave a rear guard," Reeves said easily.

"What's the Dan Boone business about?" Jackie asked.

"Oh, I've sort of been irked lately about the way your father has ridden me over those wandering steers on his ranch. Some of them, I've decided, wander clean down to the Fire Horse Club and get passed out to people who know the password." He still didn't glance at Sadar.

"If you want to make a crack about me, Reeves, speak right up!" Sadar said.

"Both of you stop trying to show off your big muscles," Jackie said calmly. She smiled at Reeves. "Has it taken you all this time to suspicion where those steaks at the Fire Horse come from?"

Reeves flushed a little at the implication. "Why didn't you say something?"

"What you and Dad didn't know gave those old boys a square meal once in a while. Don't worry about it too much, Biff. When I first suspicioned where those cattle were going I talked Dad

into giving me the stock on the ranch. Nobody will be prosecuted, even if any of us were smart enough to find a hide or catch Sim in the act."

Reeves' face showed all the chagrin of false importance discovering information has been withheld. He recovered quickly and shrugged with a tight smile, the sharp flick of his glance at Sadar showing how bitterly Reeves resented having him as a witness.

"Somebody should tell me these things," Reeves said. "Perhaps I'd better ride on up and apologize to Sim." He had a little trouble holding his sarcasm below the grating point.

Sadar looked thoughtfully toward the cabin. No wonder Tarwater had been nervous the day before when he saw Jackie and her father, particularly when Reeves asked about stray steers. Sim probably had skipped to bury a hide or dump offal down a prospect hole.

"How'd you find out Sim was giving your steers the old Robin Hood treatment?" he asked the girl.

She glanced at Reeves going toward his horse.

"Ben Liggett told me. He was fearfully worried and offered to go to work for Dad, if I'd not say anything about Sim, in order to pay for the steers. Ben thinks a lot of his old friends, you know."

They walked on toward the cabin.

NO SMOKE showed from the pipe. The two conies scrambled into their refuge and chipmunks scattered in alarm. Sadar expected the door to pop open before he was close enough to knock and was surprised when it did not. He was raising his hand for another series of thumps when his eyes caught the glint of bright steel in the end of the little passage that served as a manway for Sim's small pets.

He looked closer.

Three stiff-backed, single-edged razor blades had been forced into the end of the narrow board that formed the bottom of the passage. They had been cocked at an angle so that their corners struck above the floor of the exit. Two of them looked rusty.

Brown stains were streaked along the bottom board, splashed on the sides of the square opening.

Behind him Biff-Biff whimpered and pulled back on the chain. He gave the leash to Jackie. From the edge of the trees he heard the sounds of Reeves' horse.

Sadar put his hands at the sides of his face and pressed close to a window. He peered for several moments, squinting his eyes. Then he looked soberly at Jackie and said, "Take the bear for a walk down by the river."

For just a breath her mouth and jaw looked a little like Rouviere's. "What is it?" she asked.

"From here I'd say both Sim and his lion are dead."

He started to lift the outside bar. It was jammed in its catch with a tiny wooden wedge. He saw that the latchstring had been cut just above where it was bent on the bar. He stepped back and kicked the bar upward. The tiny wedge shot up and fell to the ground.

Jackie was unstrapping Biff-Biff's collar.

"Where's Reeves?" Sadar said.

"He went toward the garage—to tie his horse, I think."

Sadar pushed the door open and walked inside.

Sim Tarwater lay in his bunk, his face leaden and his features ghastly sharp. Lying higher than the rest of his body on a crest of twisted, disordered blankets, his right hand looked like an enormous chunk of raw meat.

Sadar crossed the room quickly, glancing briefly at the long, rigid body of Chinook on its side across the overturned table. Part of the lion's gums and white teeth showed around its blood-stained muzzle. Heavy-bodied flies rose like obscene vultures from dark blood matting the animal's side and standing in a thick pool where the warped flooring formed a little reservoir.

Reeves came in when Sadar was unwrapping a soggy shirt from Tarwater's hand. The big, red-bearded man felt Sim's other wrist and nodded at Sadar. "He's still alive." He looked at Tarwater's other hand as the last of the bloody wrap unfolded. "Great Jesus!"

There wasn't much left of Sim's right hand.

Above the wrist a tourniquet of overall cloth, tightened with the stem of a corncob pipe that was enameled with blood, showed why little Sim was alive at all.

Jackie reached the bed. Her face was white, Sadar noticed. She was carrying a towel from a washstand near the door.

The big, red-bearded man felt Sim's wrist and nodded. "He's still alive."

She felt Sim's injured arm above the elbow. "He must have loosened that tourniquet once in a while," she said. "But we'd better let it out a little before we tighten it up again and move him."

Reeves was examining furrows in Tarwater's chest and shoulders and two long gashes beneath the rent cloth of the injured man's left pants leg. He seemed to be taking a lot of time, Sadar thought.

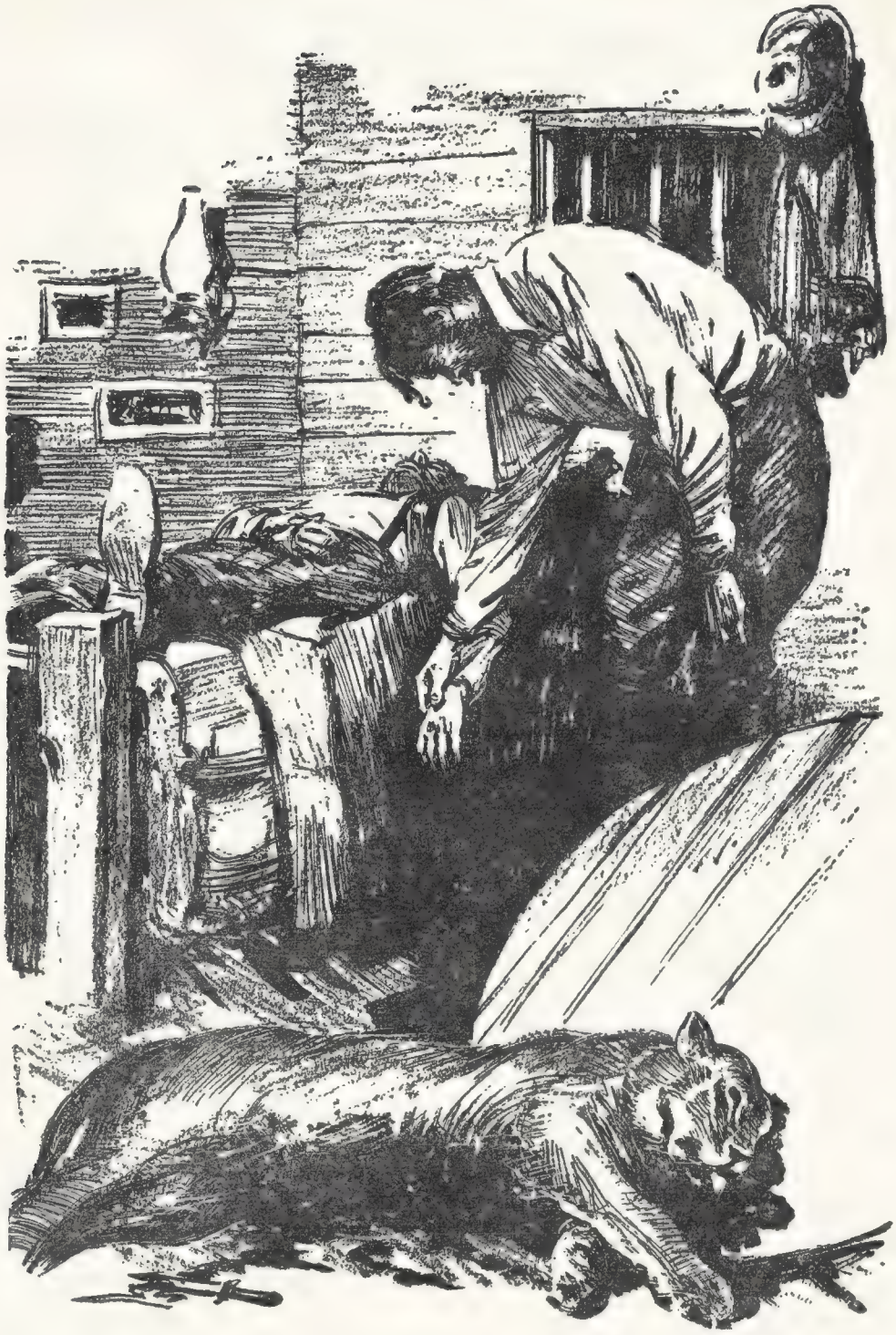
He said so.

Reeves' sharp glance seemed to carry no more than contempt for ignorance. His voice was crisp. "If he's got any deep wounds besides that hand, they'll bleed badly when we start to get him to the hospital."

"That's right," the girl said.

Sadar was glad to leave the examination to someone who seemed better qualified for it than he. He looked around the room. The table and one chair in the part that served as living quarters were overturned. Aside from that there was little disorder. Sim's struggle with the lion had been terrible and close and must not have lasted long.

Half concealed by Chinook's hind



legs lay a broad-bladed skinning knife. The coppery little man had taken a horrible mauling in order to fend that blunt, snarling head away long enough to get that knife home.

Chills tingled down Sadar's spine when he guessed the truth: Tarwater had jammed his crippled right hand into the brute's mouth while wielding the skinning knife.

From somewhere across the river he heard the sound of an approaching automobile. Jackie ran past him and looked out the doorway. "It's Dad!"

At the bed Reeves straightened. "The hand's the worst I think," he said. "We'll try getting him to the hospital."

CHAPTER XVI

DANGER LIST

AN HOUR later Sadar stood in the doorway and tried to think. He'd been trying all the while he buried the lion, swabbed out the cabin, sloshed Sim's blankets in the river and hung them out to dry. Reeves' reason for watching the cabin had been reasonable enough, and Jackie had confirmed it. Rouviere's opportune arrival in the red jeep had been predicted by the girl on the way up.

But why either Reeves or Jackie had removed the razor blades from the end of the little passage was something else. One of them had taken them while he was in the cabin. A new thought struck him. Rouviere might have taken them.

Sadar looked at the two objects in his hand: a smoothly-cut cedar wedge no larger than a small match folder and a length of severed latchstring that he'd picked off the floor just inside the doorway.

Someone had worked a plan so coldly diabolical it made him feel sick.

Someone had come silently to the cabin door while Sim and the lion were inside, cut the latchstring, wedged the bar in its catch with the little piece of wood, and fixed the heavy-backed razor blades in the end of the board. Perhaps Tarwater, certainly Chinook, had heard the person. But it had taken only seconds to set the trap.

When Sim found the latchstring cut he'd thrust his arm through the passage to lift the outside bar. The corners of the razor blades had ripped his hand. Instinctively he must have jerked the arm back. Judging from the bloodstains in the passage, he must have tried again to lift the bar, but it had been too cleverly jammed to be lifted by muscles extended awkwardly through that tiny exit.

Injuries from the razor cuts probably had not been great. Just enough to send the odor of Sim's warm blood through the cabin, tingling in the nostrils of the lion Sadar had just buried.

The person who set that ghastly trap had known Sim's habits well, must have watched the cabin to make sure the lion was inside. The thickness of the lion's blood on the floor proved that the attack had not been this morning. Sim didn't keep the lion in after dark, so the trap had been set and sprung no later than late yesterday afternoon, a long time for a man to lie helpless, fighting off growing stupor and trying to loosen a tourniquet at intervals.

He pushed with his foot against Biff-Biff in an ineffectual effort to discourage the cub from trying to dig out the conies from under the cabin. The bear had given up his attack on the rock foundation and had moved back several feet where the digging was easier. His nose was covered with dirt and his little beady eyes ringed with more of it.

Before he closed the door Sadar took a last look inside the cabin. The floor was still damp from his swabbing; only the bare mattress on the bed and salt he'd sprinkled on the bloodstains disturbed order. On the cold stove a blue pot, showing soot marks from being set directly over the flames, held potatoes Sim had been boiling. Sunlight turned to pale gold a small jar of mustard on the table. Above the scent of cedar shavings, the smell of varnish, food and tobacco smoke was the strong, unpleasant odor of blood.

He thought of little Sim's limp body and leaden face when they'd lifted him into the jeep and wondered if he'd ever be back to watch sunlight creep into the clearing.

Sadar frowned thoughtfully when he

saw how carefully Reeves' horse had been tied to the garage. Still, the animal might have been giving him some trouble after catching the lion scent. Even now the horse didn't care for the smell of cat on Sadar, and tried to bolt down the trail after he mounted.

SYLVANITE Memorial Hospital was not the remodeled residence Sadar had expected. It was a small, neat brick building surrounded by lawns and lilac hedges.

He met Ben Liggett and Deedee Ducray on their way out. Both looked gaunt and strained. They stared at him without speaking. Deedee was favoring his game hip, Sadar noticed.

"How is he?" Sadar asked.

Deedee ran one hand over the smooth cap of gray hair. "The doc says he's got a chance, maybe."

"Nobody can see him," Ben rumbled. "He ain't conscious anyway." Sadar thought he saw hostility in Ben's slate eyes. "I knowed that stinking lion would give him trouble, just like the first one he had."

Sadar studied both faces closely. At the moment the old men looked solemn and tired—and distinctly unfriendly, as if they were holding him responsible for Tarwater's condition. They left him standing on the concrete porch and walked away. Deedee was trying hard not to limp. Ben straightened heavy shoulders with an effort. They slumped before he was out of sight.

Inside, an enormous gray-headed woman looked up from writing at a metal desk. "Yes?"

"How is Sim Tarwater?"

"Critical. No visitors." She went back to writing.

Sadar shifted uneasily. Like most normal, healthy individuals he liked nothing about a hospital except the vaguely comfortable knowledge that one was about somewhere in case an accident he never intended to have slipped up in some miraculous manner.

At the far end of a small passage a nurse went briskly from one door to another. Sadar stared. "Was that Myra?"

The big woman at the desk didn't look up. "It was."

Sadar retreated.

He was less than two blocks from the hospital when Jackie picked him up in the maroon convertible he had last seen before the Fire Horse Club the night of his fight with Biff Reeves.

"We're going to see Rob Winters," she said.

"Who's he?"

"The sheriff. None of us around here are above the law, you know."

He was getting used to her now and wasn't surprised when she said, "Did you pick up the little wedge?'

He nodded.

"I've got the razor blades."

That surprised him. "Why?"

"For the same reason you took the wedge, I suppose. I shouldn't have touched the blades, I realize, but pulled them loose before I thought."

"Did Sim say anything?" Sadar asked.

She shook her head and deftly snatched a front wheel away from a bad chuckhole. "Men who have lost a lot of blood don't mutter anything."

"How do you know?"

"I took aid training at the same hospital Myra worked in during the war."

"She work at that hospital here all the time?"

"No," the girl said. "We both do when they need help."

The high-ceilinged sheriff's office in the courthouse was dusty and had a sterile smell. The thin, bald-headed, gray-eyed man who sat and listened to their account seemed to have come with the furniture, and seemed to be drowsing. But now and then he raised drooping eyelids to ask a question in a whispery voice and Sadar read cold intelligence in both words and the quick flash of gray eyes.

Winters looked at their exhibits. "I suppose you shouldn't have touched those blades, Jackie; and you, Sadar, maybe shouldn't have cleaned up the cabin."

"The flies, and that lion—" Sadar said.

"I know what you mean," Winters said. He was silent, appearing to be asleep for several moments. "You wouldn't know, but your grandfather, Sam Rigdon, gave me the first real fishin' pole I ever had when I was nine years old."

Sam Rigdon's past was always thrusting up, Sadar thought. Among the old-timers of Sylvanite he'd never heard anything but respect for his grandfather.

Winters' gray eyes darted out from under the drooping lids and fixed on Jackie. "Could have been a print on one of them blades, Jackie." He seemed to drowse off at once. Then he roused again. "But I don't think so. Anybody that had the cold guts to plan and carry out a deal like that . . ."

Sadar told him about the arrow from the dark and about the Commander incident.

At the end Winters said, "I'll throw a little study. Don't take any long fishing trips or go visiting in Chicago." For a moment his eyes were wide-open, watching Sadar. "I don't know what Sim told you, but somebody thinks it was too much."

He didn't get up when they left. He seemed to be asleep. Winters was, Sadar thought, a living refutation of the popular belief that thin men are nervous.

TO SADAR the rest of the day and all the next one were complete frustration, beginning in a series of incidents immediately after he and Jackie told their story to the sheriff. He went directly to the Fire Horse Club to see Ben Liggett and force a showdown on Ben's warning. Jammer and several old-timers were sitting in the casino, laughing and drinking whiskey straight. Ben was asleep, so deeply unconscious that Sadar had difficulty rousing him and then wasn't sure that Liggett was entirely awake. Ben blinked with sleep-reddened eyes and said, "Sim die?"

"Sim's all right, but what I want to find out—" He was talking to a man asleep. The brown-faced man was not faking; he was dead asleep, his hair startling black against the pillow.

He cursed savagely when Sadar half roused him again.

Sadar took counsel from his experience with Ben and didn't try to rouse Deedee, who appeared in as deep slumber as Liggett when Sadar peered through Deedee's open window after getting no response to knocks.

He went back to the Big Stope to eat and was virtually dragged into a chair at Mrs. Mahogany's table. She increased his feeling of frustration by telling him, among other things, that Reeves had fired Al Harris and the two bellhops. "They were the only ones in the whole staff who had guts enough to stand up to him," she said grimly, and for once Sadar had a liking for the orange-haired lobby octopus. "I heard Terry say—he's the one with the biggest freckles—that Reeves discharged Al for being too friendly with you, and the boys because one of them told you where to find a wooden Indian. Is that so?"

"I don't know," Sadar said; but he did, remembering that he had met Reeves at the door of the men's lounge just after the bellhop told Sadar where to find the Indian.

"You may be sure I'm going to protest to Mr. Rouviere!" Mrs. Mahogany said.

Sadar decided that he'd do the same, and if Rouviere couldn't see reason, he'd carry the appeal to Jackie, who seemed to know how to handle her father.

I am, Sadar told himself, *causing a lot of people a lot of trouble, but I can't stop just because of that.*

He didn't get to see Rouviere. The new night clerk told him that evening that the millionaire was in conference and was not to be disturbed. The telephone operator had her orders too. A red-bearded, heavy-set lad, the same who had wanted to take Ralston apart in the Windlass Bucket, repeated the orders less grammatically when Sadar tried to get inside the millionaire's top-floor suite.

"What's the big deal?" Sadar inquired, offering the sentry a cigarette.

"That louse Ralston is in there," the lad said in disgust.

Ralston certainly was taking up a lot of Rouviere's time, Sadar thought. And for a man who had already decided against a proposition Rouviere was giving a lot of time, merely to keep Ralston's uncontrollable temper from exploding.

Sadar went back to the Fire Horse Club. Ben and Deedee, the Jammer said, had gone down the river to the Jammer's ranch for some late-evening fishing. The only bright spot in the

whole day came when Sadar caught a brisk young doctor at the hospital and was told that Sim had responded favorably to transfusions and was holding his own. The doctor added with an air of mystery that no outsiders except Winters' deputy or those authorized by the sheriff were to be allowed in the room.

Sadar remembered one of Winters' whispery questions: "None of them windows was blocked so Sim couldn't see out, was they?" The sheriff had figured that Tarwater might have seen the man who jammed the bar and set the deadly trap, and was taking no chances of the unknown person's entering Sim's hospital room to finish the job the lion hadn't been able to do.

Sadar woke to his seventh day with the full knowledge that he had discarded the last trace of hope to find the calaverite during the time left on his pact with Tanner. Even if Tarwater recovered and cleared up his puzzling statements and told who had tried to kill him, there would still be all those weeks of dead work to get to the ore, always assuming that Sim's guess was accurate in the first place. Before he got out of bed Sadar went over Tarwaters incoherent revelations. They made no sense, and even if they did, the Indian, according to Jackie, was two thousand miles away. That was another sticker.

Damn the Indian! Damn the whole business!

He felt better after breakfast, even though he was forced to tell Mrs. Mahogany a pack of his best lies about giving up all pretense of finding the highgrade.

HE MET Jackie in a blue uniform on her way through the lobby. She had stayed near Tarwater all night. She looked at Sadar with odd hesitancy before asking, "Are you sure Sim didn't have his bow and arrow the first night you saw him?"

Sadar said he was sure. She left him under pressure from Mrs. Mahogany before he could question her as he wanted to concerning her reasons for the query. A good deal of his vexed feeling came back and he damned Mrs. Mahogany soundly under his breath, at the same time wondering if Sim had recovered enough to talk and throw the blame on himself for the attempt to kill Sadar. Or had Jackie planted the idea, or what the hell *did* she mean?

He went at once to the Fire Horse and found Jammer asleep in the second bed in Ben's room. The Swede apparently feared no thieves, for the outside door was open and the patched screen door unhooked. Jammer roused easily.

"You're a regular cranberry merchant!" he said, all his good nature glowing in his little eyes the moment he was fully awake.

"Where's Ben?"

Jammer yawned. "Him and Deedee must have stayed at my place down the river." He massaged his stubby hands and examined them as if testing for missing fingers.

"Did Sim Tarwater have his bow and arrows with him when he came here the first night I ever saw you?" Sadar demanded.

Jammer squinted. "Hell, I don't know. If he did, I never saw 'em. You're not working for the cattlemen's association, are you?"

Jackie certainly did get around, Sadar thought. Already the Swede knew that Sadar was informed about Sim's cattle stealing. "You sure you don't remember about the bow and arrows?" Sadar asked.

"I never saw 'em, if he had 'em." Jammer grinned widely. "Played any poker lately?"

Sadar grinned back. "Put your toes out from under those covers and I'll stick some lighted matches between them."

Jammer stopped laughing when Sadar reached the door. "The poker festival opens tonight at the hotel. Reeves always brings in some pretty fast card players. Drop by and watch the fun!"

Driving a brand-new blue sedan, Sheriff Winters picked Sadar up a block from the Fire Horse. He parked the car carefully, feeling for the curb as if his tires might be contaminated by any slight bump. "If I'd left word at the hotel for you to come over to my office—no telling how much buzz a little thing like that might stir up, not that you're

"Seems you got Sim to tell where the calaverite was hid and then tried to get him chawed to pieces by the lion."

not going to find it bad enough anyway."

Sadar twisted in the seat. "What's that?"

"Some of the facts on how Sim got hurt have begun to circulate. It seems that you got Sim to tell where the calaverite was hid and then tried to get him chawed to pieces by the lion." Winters plucked a tiny black thread off the upholstery and rolled it between his teeth.

Sadar fought off quick-rising anger. "That's a damn lie, of course." He looked at Winters for confirmation, found the sheriff regarding him keenly from under sleepy eyelids.

"No man is above the law," Winters said. "If you wasn't Sam Rigdon's grandson I'd be forced to play safe and hold you on suspicion of covering up evidence when you tidied up that cabin. Some folks might think it's funny you'd do that. I don't. Some folks might think it's funny to trust a man you never seen before because you happened to know his granddad. In this case I don't."

"Thanks. Did Reeves start those rumors?"

"I didn't say that. Besides I look for Sim to be telling who he saw come near that cabin—in a day or two. So just take it easy, son."

Winters started the car and inched into the street as if backing into a fearful stream of traffic.

Sadar was almost deaf and blind from anger as the blue sedan rolled down the street. Reeves was the one, he was sure. Reeves had deliberately, vindictively started the lie. All the years of fighting another lie came back strongly. He was too angry to consider that he might be jumping at a wrong conclusion.

The sheriff let Sadar out on Main Street.

"Take it easy," Winters said. "I see you got a temper like Sam. Take it easy, but if you should have to hit someone, don't start trouble on hotel property. It ain't in my jurisdiction, of course, but if two fellows happened to get in a brawl in an alley, or off the main drag, say, I don't think the town law would give any trouble—if it was a fair fight."

It *was* Reeves!

"Nasty rumors sort of make my work harder," the sheriff said. "Of course some are true, like the one last year that hinted the fellow who found the money in Reeves' treasure hunt was an old pal of Reeves'! That was none of my business, of course, but sometimes I don't have too much to do." Winters examined the edge of the car window for signs of severe wear. "Besides I never used a cent of the county's money for calls when I proved that rumor, just out of curiosity to myself. Besides my wife, I reckon you're about the first one I happened to mention that to."

Sadar watched the blue sedan go toward the courthouse. Winters missed a deep chuckhole with his front wheels, caught it with one hind wheel. The sheriff got out quickly and began to examine the car to see if it was wrecked.

Sadar went purposefully toward the Big Stope, one thing in mind: to beat hell out of Reeves.

CHAPTER XVII

THE POKER FESTIVAL

THE desk clerk said Reeves had not been in the hotel since shortly after breakfast. Mrs. Mahogany amplified by saying Rouviere and Reeves had been at the office behind the hotel all day. At the office Dill said the millionaire

and Reeves were not there now, nor did he know where they were. A chambermaid cleaning Reeves' quarters in the hotel got a scared look when she saw Sadar's face and said she hadn't seen Mr. Reeves all day.

Sadar's temper cooled gradually, but not his determination.

It was late afternoon before Mrs. Mahogany came out with information she had wangled from somewhere that said Reeves and Rouviere had taken a sudden business trip to Eldorado. "There's something brewing around here," she said suspiciously. "The whole staff is acting oddly. There's something I dont' know about." That, she implied, was a grievous condition. "But I'll find out!" she added. That, she implied, was as sure as sunset.

Sadar spent the rest of the day restlessly. He went to the hospital and found out that Sim was "holding his own." He called on Al Harris, who said he wasn't concerned about getting fired, that he'd had enough of Reeves anyway. He went back to the Fire Horse to see Ben and to Deedee's and found them still gone. He went upstairs, under Mrs. Mahogany's guidance, and looked at a huge banquet room he hadn't known was in the hotel. It had been converted into a casino. Mrs. Mahogany warned him about bucking the play.

"It's for suckers," she confided. "I'm not against gambling, you understand, particularly if the profits are used in a worthy cause. Money from this is supposed to go to a veterans' organization and they have nominal sponsorship of the casino. However, Reeves is the actual one in charge. I've seen a game or two in my travels but I never did see such downright robbery as goes on here. Reeves imports the gamblers. What the dealers don't steal the boss gambler and Reeves split. They give the veterans' organization just enough to keep them from blowing their—from protesting too loudly." She couched a mental lance. "Mr. Rouviere has never seen what goes on here," she said.

Mr. Rouviere, Sadar thought, was going to get an earful. Even so, he felt his respect for Mrs. Mahogany increasing. He tried to remember her real name.

That she hadn't been blowing bubbles was evident that night when the casino opened to a jam-packed crowd of Western-garbed players. "Poker Festival" was not altogether apt. Though there were four poker tables going, roulette, faro bank and dice were getting the heavy play.

Forewarned, Sadar observed the remarkable disparity in the number of chips and the number cashed. Mrs. Mahogany paused beside him just long enough to comment pungently on that fact. Then she spied Rouviere across the room and cast off. Her progress toward the millionaire didn't seem hurried, but it reminded Sadar of a bulky fullback barreling through opposition.

Jammer Roos and two of the oldtimers from the Fire Horse looked natural at one of the poker tables. The Jammer was not doing well. One of his confederates was doing quite well, and the other wasn't suffering. On his own deal the Swede plunged against the houseman, came up with the lowest of three hands. The highest belonged to one of the oldtimers who had sucked along through three raises with seeming reluctance. The houseman eyed the winner quietly.

While Sadar watched, an alert-looking, craggy-faced man in beautifully tailored gray strolled up to the table and took over from the dealer with a courteous smile.

The newcomer wasted no glance on the winner. He smiled genially at the source of the mischief, and Jammer grinned back.

Sadar edged closer.

Jammer lost two small pots, grinned and twisted his loosened tie farther toward one ear. His shirt already looked like a contour map of the Badlands. He opened on his own deal and drew two cards while the houseman's cold eyes watched every movement of the broad hands. The two oldtimers stayed in, kept raising back and forth with the houseman in the middle. The Jammer went along, then began to raise himself. His two confederates laid down and the houseman followed with a set smile.

"Openers?" he requested the Swede politely.

The Jammer's hand held a pair of

jacks. The rest was deadwood. "Bluffin' seems to be the only way I can win a pot!" the Swede said jovially.

The houseman smiled. His smile was getting a little set around the edges as well as in the middle.

Sadar smiled. The war chest of the Fire Horse Club would be much heavier after this was over. Jammer and the other oldtimers had rehearsed well during those long hours.

AT THE far end of the room Sadar saw Jackie enter. Mrs. Mahogany had Rouviere and was giving him the promised earful. He was listening attentively, but he broke away from his informant abruptly when he saw his daughter. Rouviere went quickly to her, took her arm and together they left the casino.

Someone pounded on Sadar's back. He looked around to see old Charley, the one-time railroad engineer. Charley was happily drunk and drunkenly happy.

"This is the stuff, Young Sam!" He closed one eye wickedly and tilted his head toward his shoulder. "Money on the tables, women laughing, bright lights, things a-moving right along!" He wagged his head. "Ain't seen so much excitement since the week after they hit the big stope!"

"The big stope . . ." Sadar repeated the words slowly as something started to come to the front of his mind.

"Sure the biggest body of ore they ever opened on the hill. Hell!" Charley looked at Sadar's abstraction with pity. "The big stope! The place where I dropped my Six Hundred ingine!"

Charley's words pulled a trigger in Sadar's mind. *Injun in the Big Stope.* Great God! How he'd misunderstood Sim's words. *Ingine in the big stope. Some geezer* . . . Why, Myra had mispronounced the word 'geyser' for fun, and still he hadn't tumbled. When Charley's Six Hundred had hit icy water there must have been a whale of a geyser of steam and water.

He left Charley in the middle of a sentence.

In front of the hotel he found Terry and Gary lounging suspiciously and eyeing the ring of carbide lamps with skulduggery showing plainly on their homely faces.

"What's the pitch, boys?"

They looked at each other and grinned. "Get us down a couple of them lamps and we'll show you," one said. "We're going to use 'em to write on the hotel windows, Reeves Is a Big Jerk and an Unfair Son—"

"A worthy thought but a little out of place on those front windows."

"Nobody would see it in back!" one of the boys said.

"Besides, that would be misusing hotel property," Sadar said. He put one foot on the window sill, leaped up and out and unhooked a lamp. He turned the water off and blew the flame out. "You guys stay out of trouble. Tomorrow I'll see if I can square the mess I got you into."

He walked away rapidly.

"He tells *us* not to steal a lamp, Gary!"

That, Sadar decided, would have to be Terry talking.

He saw a light in Deedee's shack as he passed on his way to Sylvan Mountain. Dark as it was he had been up the hill so many times in the last few days, he moved surely. He was above Number Five Vivandiere when he saw two bobbing pinpoints of light coming toward the mountain from town. That might be Terry and Gary . . . Or it might be somebody else . . .

Whatever it was that came charging at him from the trees below Number Three Vivandiere gave plenty of warning. He swung the lamp in a tight arc, shoulder high, and followed with his left hand.

Both blows met only night.

When he heard the snuffling at his feet and felt the clutch of little paws he felt as foolish as a man who starts at his own image in a dark mirror.

"Biff-Biff," he said to the cub, "you might get shot doing that sort of thing."

The cub followed him onto the half displaced dump of Number Three. Its feet padded behind him when he groped his way into the tunnel. Behind him was the dim sky bowl, the lights of the town, the last vestiges of illumination of all kinds that make travel above ground possible on the darkest of nights. Around him, ahead of him, was black-

"Biff-Biff," he said to the cub, "you might get shot doing that sort of thing."

ness so nearly total he felt he could clutch it in his hands.

He lit the lamp. Biff-Biff fell back on his haunches when the sudden spit of light startled him. For a moment Sadar thought the cub was going to bolt from the tunnel. He admitted his great relief when the bear pawed at its eyes and elected to say. Biff-Biff was a living thing, and living things communicate courage to each other by presence in utter darkness.

They went up the tunnel, so lately water-blasted clear of every loose object. A small stream was flowing now, working its way from side to side on the irregular floor. Plenty of tracks showed in the thin mud coating left by the flood. Some of the curious throng had explored, he decided. As he went deeper the tracks thinned out, but still ahead of him was a trail of footprints made by shoes that had gone and come many times.

He picked up a curled piece of dry bark and stood quietly for several moments, staring toward blackness beyond his lamp. Biff-Biff pressed against his legs.

SOMEWHERE in the bowels of the mountain, ground moved. Tommy-knockers sent their muffled raps. He had never terrified himself with his own imagination—but here, far from the earth's surface, bottled by darkness and cold damp walls, he thought of the story of Cornish miners who would never go back into the Argonaut Mine after a large number of their crew were killed by cave-ins. "Ain't Tommy-knockers makin' sounds down there no more. It's bloody dead people tryin' to find the way out and groanin'!"

The Tommy-knockers rapped again, their vibrations traveling down the cold walls as water knocks move along pipes. Icy water flowed by with a muted hiss. Biff-Biff whimpered and clutched Sadar's legs.

He went on.

Soon he began to feel an increased draft that proved the flood had opened the mountain clear to the surface under the old railroad. His lamp flame trilled and waved. Far ahead his footsteps echoed with sepulchral *pooms!* as their concussions raced toward every open part of the workings.

The gloom and dampness did much to cool down his first flush of sudden realization about Sim's meaning. Tarwater hadn't finished his statement. Maybe the engine reference had been only a starting point. Maybe the flood hadn't cleared the raise that led up to the big stope where the locomotive was. It was very unlikely that the raise would be clear, because timbers would lodge and jam easier where the full force of the water hadn't been on them.

He doubted and went on.

The draft around him increased, raising a chill on his back that wasn't all from cold.

He passed the dark blot of the raise where he and Deedee had saved themselves. That would be about a thousand feet in, with only two or three hundred left to where the jam had been. He stopped suddenly, looking back, wondering about that raise. How far up had it gone? Still, if it led anywhere at all that place would have been explored by countless people in search of the calaverite. Anyhow, there was no way to reach the ladder now, without help.

On the tunnel floor before him he saw a splinter of bright wood. He picked it up and pressed it between his fingers. The wood was taking moisture but wasn't damp enough to have been in the

mine very long. Biff-Biff crowded between his feet as Sadar stood staring at moving shadows.

Sadar shook out a cigarette, feeling the coldness of his fingers when they brushed against his lips. The splinter ignited readily from the carbide flame, in turn lit the cigarette. He tossed the piece of wood away and heard it spit as it struck water.

Somewhere far ahead he thought he heard sound. Then the mine was tomblike except for the splashing of water. Biff-Biff was shivering against his legs.

He glanced back of him toward the old raise and his heart bucketed. Floating toward him was a nebulous, twisting something in the form of a small, thin board.

For a tiny prick of time his mind stood still. Then he recognized the apparition as the vapors formed when the lighted splinter had struck water. The momentary shock taught him the folly of standing still while imagination robbed reason. He started up the bore.

Fine rock sifted down from the old raise behind him.

He turned so fast Biff-Biff was trampled. In long strides Sadar went back to the foot of the raise.

The man who came sliding down the footwall on a rope was no apparition. It was Ben Liggett, a square battery lamp hooked on the front of his overalls, one hand trying to hold a long-barreled pistol and the rope at the same time. His clothes were muddy, his hat was gone and his face looked dead white under his coal-black hair.

He lit hard and staggered across the tunnel. The gun exploded and a bullet ricocheted toward the portal.

"Sadar—" he said as he turned.

Sadar hit him hard just over the heart.

Biff-Biff coughed in terror and began to run in circles.

FIVE minutes later Sadar stood at the foot of another raise, the shaft that led upward to the big stope. Behind him was Ben, secured wrists and ankles with his own rawhide shoe laces and presumably still unconscious, if his inert condition when Sadar had left him had not been misleading.

The man who came sliding down the rope was no apparition—it was Ben Liggett.

Piled ahead in the tunnel was a formidable stack of broken timber and big rocks. Some of the wood showed axe and saw marks. Other timbers showed that dynamite had taken pulpy bites from them without more than shredding the surface.

Overhead none of the original timber remained. The raise looked ravely and dangerous from the loosening effect of water that had funneled down it. A ladder stood at the foot of the raise. Sadar's light showed the form of a sprag at the top of the ladder and then another ladder reaching upward into blackness. Clearing that raise from the bottom had been a dangerous job, a task that no miner would have attempted for wages.

Beyond his light there must be hanging unscaled slabs and coffin lids that might come down with no more urging than concussion of a loud voice or light vibration against the walls; rocks that could tear a man off that frail ladder and spray his body through the wet muck like the tissue and blood of a mouse under the stamp of a hob-nailed boot on a gravel walk.

He hooked the lamp in the crotch of his thumb and palm. The forty-five-year-old trail led upward.

Upward he went. Without the division of manway and chute the dark rectangular opening looked like a grave. Climbing upward in a grave. Well, that was better than being lowered the other way. The poor humor didn't comfort him much.

He passed sprag after sprag, light timbers placed temporarily for working purposes. Great gaps in the sides of the raise showed where rock had been torn away by the water. Slabs hung so precariously he could have torn them loose with his fingers. Unlike the solid bore of the level below him, this raise had been run in loose formation, granite softened by talc intrusions.

Four ladders were behind him when he came dripping wet into the big stope.

Overhead was blackness and dripping water. His light seemed a feeble thing. He knew he stood in an immense cavern where walls, now free of cold water's heavy pressure, might slough rocks as big as the side of a tall church. Square sets filled the stope as far as his puny lamp would let him see. Under water all this time, they should be sound, but their placement against the sides of the stope must have suffered.

Before him a two-by-six plank led into gloom. He stood reluctant to leave the top of the raise and venture outward into those cells of timber. Fifty feet below on the tunnel level Biff-Biff was making scared, whimpering sounds. He flashed his light around him and saw a long rope draped across a wet timber.

Sadar went out on the plank. He found another at the end of the first and followed the trail; deeper into a stope filled with water-logged timber placed by men probably now dead; deeper into a mountain that had been waiting for years to clamp this opening shut, wall to wall. He hoped the bulkhead over him on the level above was still in place. He couldn't see it.

He moved slowly, testing posts with his free hand, putting his feet out cautiously on the plank. Then he came to a place where the timber was no longer standing. It had been sheered, snapped, crushed by something that had made a gigantic hole through the symmetry of the square sets.

He saw the engine.

It lay slanting downward on its side in the gloom like the ghostly hulk of a sunken ship that had died by the head. The smashed pilot rested on the floor of the stope. The other end leaned against a ledge. Sand domes and stacks had been sheered off the torn and ripped boiler; two of the drivers on the side he could see were twisted outward like deformed feet; the main drive rod had torn loose to rip upward through the auxiliary air tank, giving the curious appearance of a grasshopper's leg. From all the rotting metal came a noisome smell.

The planks led him to a ledge where rested the upper end midst the remains of the cab. Thick slabs that might have been soft black stone came away in his hands when he touched metal.

He flashed his light around. Farther behind him on the ledge lay the twisted wreckage of the tender. The blackened links of one safety chain still dangled past a broken drawbar.

Tracks in the slime indicated that

this was as far as anyone had come. He looked at the doorless firebox. He hung his lamp in a hole where a rivet once had been and got to his knees.

The handful of ore he withdrew was mixed with fragments of fire brick. Leaning close to the light, he dug with his thumbnail at the rock. He wiped the piece of rock on his wet shirt and examined it again close to the flame. Then he took the lamp and kneeled again.

For the first time since entering the stope his light was large when he used it to illuminate the firebox. He saw broken, twisted flues and fire brick. He saw fragments of rotted sacks.

He saw the calaverite.

CHAPTER XVIII

RAINBOW'S END

FOR several moments he did nothing but stare at that harmless-looking pile of slimed rock there in the cold maw of a locomotive that had gone from life to this damp gloom in one spectacular moment forty-seven years before. Behind that calaverite was a long, bitter, bloody trail.

But now it was ended. Not quite, he amended, but it would be when Rouviere had the highgrade in his possession on the surface.

He straightened, listening to the endless drip of water from the bulkhead somewhere high above.

"Well, you found it, Sadar!"

The voice came out of the gloom behind the tender.

Sadar whirled so fast he rammed his burner into the soft metal of the boiler. The light went out.

A switch clicked and a beam cut through the blackness, revealing timbers he hadn't seen. Deedee came walking from behind the tender. He laughed. "Didn't mean to scare hell out of you."

The old man came close. Sadar tensed himself. Deedee raised one hand and began to tug at something on his hat band. "Here's a gooser," he said.

Sadar took the fine wire without moving his eyes from the man who held the electric lantern. Deedee moved the torch close to Sadar's dead lamp. "Ain't you going to clear it?" the old man asked.

Sadar got the wire started and cleaned the burner hole. He relit the lamp. Deedee hung his own on the boiler and leaned against the right side of the battered engine. Even in the artificial light it was plain to see that Ducray was brutally tired.

He should be, Sadar thought. For two nights he and Ben must have knocked themselves out clearing that raise and putting in sprags.

"You knew it was here all the time?" Sadar asked.

Deedee's voice was weary. "Ben knew it—I mean he was pretty sure—after Sim talked some when he had a bad fever and pneumonia several years back and Ben was taking care of him." Deedee stared off into the darkness. "How'd you get past Ben?"

"I had to let him have one, right over the heart."

Deedee seemed to slump. "I hate to think of Ben going like that, even if he did try to kill Sim to keep him from talking too much to you. Ben was hell to turn when he got his mind on something, and he'd had it on this highgrade ever since Sim talked in his fever. This stope had been blocked for years, but Ben knowed that mud and timber in the raise was slipping all the time, ready to bust loose.

"Then after Rouviere come back and talked some of reopening, Ben was scared. When you showed up and started working on Sim, Ben got awful nervous. He'd planned on this for so long, figuring on using the money to help the oldtimers around Sylvanite."

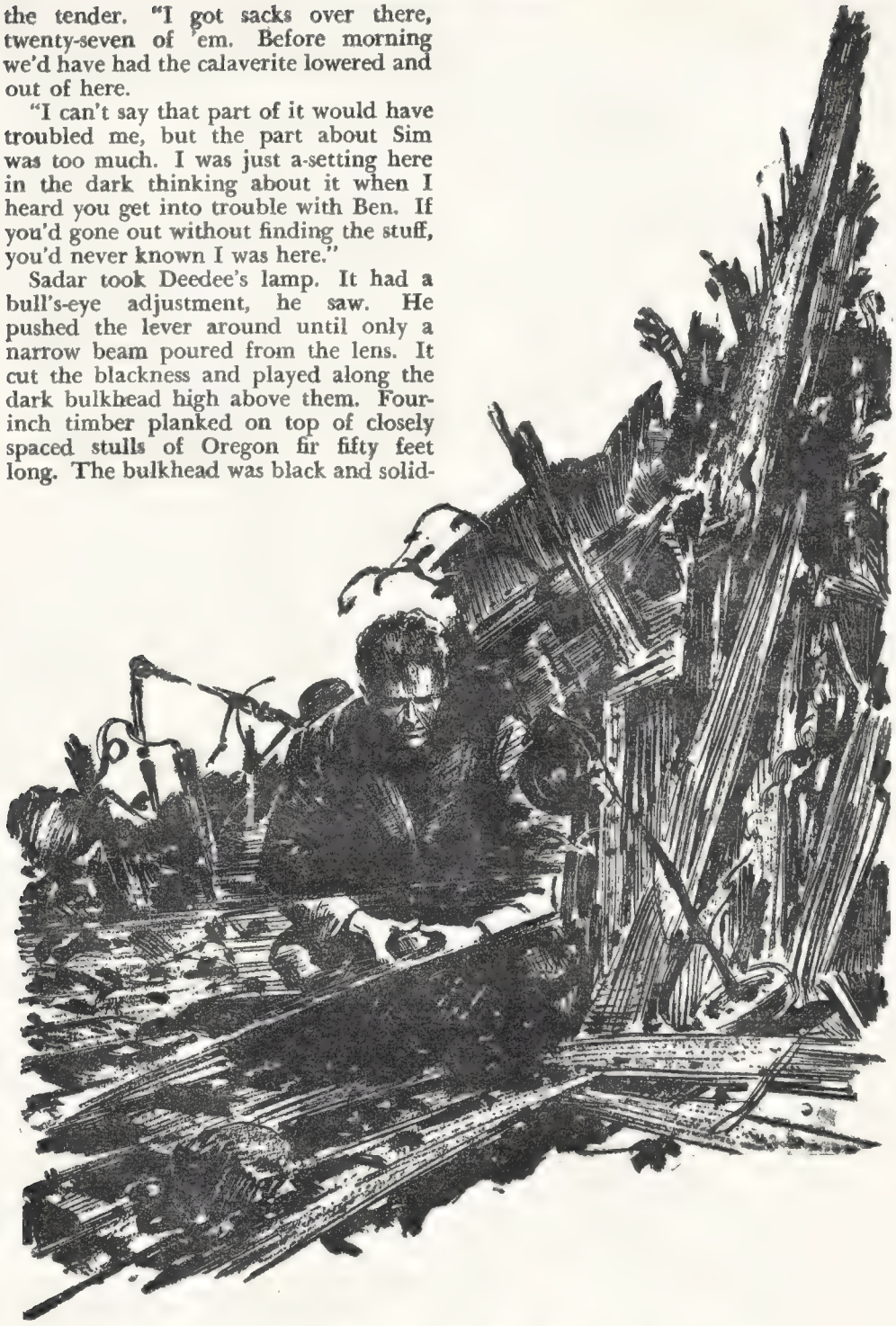
Ducray was tired to the point where his words came easily in a hollow voice.

"After I accidentally busted that jam loose Ben knowed he'd have to move fast before you or someone else got to prowling. He tried to kill Sim the night after the flood, but I didn't guess that until I heard the story tonight, just before we come up here. He'd talked me into going down to the Jammer's ranch, so's we could sleep without being bothered, he said; but now I know it was so I wouldn't hear what really happened to Sim." Deedee flirted one hand toward

the tender. "I got sacks over there, twenty-seven of 'em. Before morning we'd have had the calaverite lowered and out of here.

"I can't say that part of it would have troubled me, but the part about Sim was too much. I was just a-setting here in the dark thinking about it when I heard you get into trouble with Ben. If you'd gone out without finding the stuff, you'd never known I was here."

Sadar took Deedee's lamp. It had a bull's-eye adjustment, he saw. He pushed the lever around until only a narrow beam poured from the lens. It cut the blackness and played along the dark bulkhead high above them. Four-inch timber planked on top of closely spaced stulls of Oregon fir fifty feet long. The bulkhead was black and solid-



The handful of ore was mixed with fragments of fire brick. Leaning close to the light, he dug with his thumbnail at the rock.

looking, as tight from wall to wall as it had been following repairs of damage done by the plummeting engine almost half a century before.

"How did the thieves get in here?" Sadar asked.

"According to Sim's theory they come down an old inclined winze from the level above, at the far end of this stope. The top of the winze was set off to one side of the main drift in a big station, of course—Mell's timber station it was, since the winze had been filled for years. But the muck must have been slipping. The Hibe miners who robbed the vug made a deal with Mell, his helper and another Vivandiere miner, a trammer. After the Hibernian men tapped the vug from the old stope side, they took the ore back into the Vivandiere through a crosscut on Number Four, then up to Three and then on up another old raise to Two.

"In the meantime Mell and his helper had opened up the old winze enough to get through. They must have had it covered with timber, with other timber already cut to put a bulkhead in three-four feet from the top. Soon's the calaverite was hid down here—it couldn't 've took long with eight or nine men working like fiends while trammers were booming cars along the bulkhead above us—Mell and his helper threw the false bottom across the winze; the trammer brought 'em muck three cars at a clip, I suppose. In no time the winze was filled—anyway it looked like it was. I suppose they spread chips and timber trimmings on top so nobody in the world would've thought the winze wasn't just as solid-full as it was supposed to have been for years.

"Except Sim was a little sharper than most. He got suspicious about that winze when he scraped his toe down into fresh muck. He was headed to tell about it when he met Sam Rigdon. Sam had just been canned and Sim's time was waiting for him. That made him sore, naturally. He got a damned sight madder when his brother was killed. Then all the trouble started in earnest. One way or another the thieves got killed.

"When Besse was looking hardest for the calaverite, right at first, someone suggested trying this stope. The raise we come up a while ago was blocked and bulkheaded on the level below. Only one or two old hands even knew about the old winze—you know yourself that maps never do show the whole parts of a workings. Sim looked at that winze, maybe others did too, but there it was filled up and solid-looking as a church. But in spite of all that Sim says they actually did start to tear out some of the decking on the lower bulkhead above us. It was quite a job—you know what heavy plank swelled tight from damp and spiked solid would be like. They would 've got through it easy enough though, but Besse's brother-in-law talked 'em out of it. He'd been sitting his whole shift the night the vug was robbed right on that bulkhead, and he said his honor was being questioned and a lot of junk like that. I guess he raised a lot of French hell. Anyway, he talked old Besse out of ripping through the bulkhead.

"You'll have to admit it did seem silly to break into a place that looked fool-proof and had been sealed off for years.

"So here the calaverite stayed since before you were born."

SADAR nodded slowly. He'd been holding between his front teeth the wire he'd used to clean his burner. Now he handed it back to Deedee and the old man automatically fixed the gooser in his hat band with care.

Around them was gloom, the dangerous weight of a whole mountain. They were standing beside a fortune in long-lost ore. Yet neither saw anything incongruous in the meticulous care with which they handled that tiny piece of thin wire.

"Ben warned me to leave, then tried to kill me with Sim's bow and arrow the first night I was in Sylvanite," Sadar said.

"How do you know it was Ben?" Deedee's eyes were dark blots in the shadows on his face.

"Because I figure Sim left his bow and quiver somewhere around the Fire Horse Club. When Reeves and I got in that fight, Sim left so fast he forgot his

equipment. Ben took it and went after me."

Sadar shot the beam of Deedee's lamp toward the bottom of the stope thirty feet below. It glistened on slime left by the water, revealed jumbled piles of black timber, a stream of water running along the sloping bottom. The stench of wood and metal rotting so far from sunlight was powerful.

"Did you see Ben around the club an hour, say, after I left?" Sadar asked.

"Sim always left his bow and arrows at the back door of the casino unless it was raining," Deedee mused. "I don't remember seeing Ben after you left, but I was in bed and I went to sleep pretty soon after they got me there."

Water dripping from the bulkhead in a hundred places was the only sound for several moments. Unconsciously Sadar was holding the light so that the beam was dead on the interior of the firebox, giving an eerie illusion of fire where fire properly belonged but would never be again.

"There's no reason why Rouviere should have this ore," Deedee said suddenly. "By daylight we can have it out of here and hid."

Sadar shook his head.

"Why not? Rouviere didn't even believe it could be found. He wouldn't even try. He's rich and don't need one cent more. We can divide it. I'll take my share and work it off gradually through the mine on top of the hill. I can use the money to do a lot of good for people in Sylvanite, the people that ain't benefitting a damn bit by all this tourist business. I can see that nobody goes hungry, that kids have decent clothes and medical care when they need it. I can use every damn cent of it to do good. Why can't gold that's caused nothing but bloodshed and trouble finally be used for good, instead of going into the pockets of people who don't need it?"

The worst part of Deedee's argument, Sadar thought, was its absolute truth.

"Rouviere can use it to build a rock wall behind the hotel, for all of me," Sadar said. "But we're not taking one piece."

"You're a fool, Sadar!" Deedee stretched his left arm along the blackness of the boiler. "Who would know? Who's going to stop us?"

"No good, Deedee," Sadar said. He felt no elation now that the calaverite was found; he felt only great heaviness over the blood already spilled because of that harmless-looking pile of rock inside the engine hulk. He hoped he could find a way to avoid further violence before the long trail ended. For the first time he wished he had taken Ben's gun from where it lay trampled in the water on the level below.

"Deedee, you told me everything I wanted to know, but you reversed your part and Ben's. You're the one Sim told about the ore while he was sick; you tried to kill me with Sim's bow and arrow—God knows it must have been agony for you to walk that night, but you did; you pinned me in the Commander; you set the trap for Sim soon after the flood; and you forced Ben into this without his knowing that you'd tried to kill Sim or me."

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WATER dripped from the bulkhead, sloshed down square sets somewhere out in the gloom and gathered itself into a stream on the stope bottom. A chunk of rock sloughed from a wall with a dull sound.

Deedee stood motionless, looking at Sadar.

Then he laughed. Except for an undertone of tension which might have been due to fatigue the sound was normal. Deedee shifted a little. The rotten iron of the cab deck broke with a crusty sound under one foot and let his shoe come hard against the ledge a few inches below.

"You're Sam all over," Deedee said. "You couldn't fool Sam. For a minute I thought you might have fallen even when I knew better. Tell me—how'd you know?"

"Two guesses, things that came to me while you were talking. The wedge in Sim's latch was too neat to have been made by anyone around here that I know except you; then the silent way you sneaked up on Ralston. It took a lot of silence to get near Sim's door without him popping it open. When you sneaked up on Ralston you didn't yell at him. You spoke so quietly. Only a man with chilled steel nerves could do that, Deedee; and only a man with no nerves at all could have fixed that deal up for Sim without fumbling."

Deedee nodded. His voice trembled when he asked, "Couldn't you have got by without killing Ben?"

"He isn't dead. He isn't even hurt, Deedee. If Ben had wanted to stop me the sure way he could have shot me cold turkey when I walked under that raise. I knew that when I hit him, but he scared me so bad I let him have one before I could stop it."

"Let him have one . . ." Deedee repeated the words slowly. "That fooled me. It used to mean something else in the old days."

"Your goal has been good all the time, Deedee," Sadar said. "It's been hard for me to understand that a man as unselfish as you could be so cold-blooded when someone got in his way. I can forgive you for trying to kill me—but not for the way you went for little Sim, poor harmless Sim Tarwater, who thought you—"

"Shut up, damn you! Don't you think that deal gave me the snakes almost! I haven't slept more than one hour since. I walked around and around the cabin all night the morning before you seen me in the garden when you were going to the Hibernian. But hell's fire! When you've set your heart on something for years and years like I did with this ore; when a man comes into this mine every few months year after year, snapping at his own insides because he has to wait for time and rot to do something he can't do himself; when he's gone through all that—do you think he's going to be stopped at the last minute? When your brain's on fire with only one thought, do you think friends or anything else matter in the long run?"

"You saved my life twice," Sadar said thoughtfully.

"And I tried twice to kill you. I got nervous when I first saw you, figuring Sam Rigdon might have guessed as close as Sim did—or that Sim might have told him. I tried to kill you the first night you were here. Then I pushed the Commander portal in trying to scare you off."

Sadar was standing at the end of the plank which led out on the square sets. He still held both lamps, the flame of his own directed toward Deedee, the long beam of the other still flooding the interior of the firebox.

"The second time I tried to kill you, Sadar, was when I was showing you through the mines. At first I figured you didn't know nothing. Then you mentioned Jason Mell and something inside of me began to burn. I started that flood purposely to—"

"Why, Great God, Deedee . . . !"

"You think I took a big chance. If I'd realized the first round on that ladder into the old raise was as rotten as it was, maybe I wouldn't have done it. But I figured on unblocking this stope and getting rid of you at the same time. I faked that hip deal, Sadar, and yelled for you to go on. I knew you'd never make it, but I figured my out was the raise. When you come back and honestly thought you were saving me it took all the heart out of me."

The old man's voice was tired and calm.

"It took me back fifty years to when I was a kid and your grandfather carried me out of a caving stope when other men had run and messed their pants. For a minute it seemed it was happening all over again." Deedee stared out into blackness, while water dripped and sloshed from far overhead. "Who knows. I might not have made it up that raise alone. As big and young as you are you needed help."

Deedee wiped the back of his hand across his mouth in a weary gesture. His face was damp and pale. Sadar's light caught the jut of the old man's high-bridged nose, made hollow sockets of Deedee's eyes.

"Sim's going to get well, Sadar. I'll go to him and tell him what I done and beg him to understand. He knows how I've tried to help everybody I could. Sim'll understand, even if he don't forgive me. I'll do that if you split the calaverite with Ben and me. Nobody in the whole world outside us four will know. Sim may hate my guts and never talk to me again, but he won't say a word about what happened."

There was no denying the sincerity of Deedee's proposal. Foully as he'd played the game he'd done it under the drive of madness that infects minds with a single, cherished purpose.

"No dice," Sadar said. "If Sim recovers I forget everything. You and Rob Winters and Tarwater can settle things." He paused. "The highgrade goes to Rouviere."

DEEDEE said nothing for several moments. Then he spoke quietly. "Ah, well . . . I knowed you were like Sam . . ."

His long arm went down. There was a crunching break and his hand came back into the light with the long Johnson bar of the engine. He balanced it in both big hands and stepped forward. "I can't be stopped now," he said simply.

Sadar fell back a step on the plank. He put the electric beam in Deedee's eyes.

"I have to do it, Young Sam. I have to." There was a pleading note in Deedee's voice that made his words terrible.

Sadar fell back two more steps. Now both feet were on the plank and it was thirty feet or more to that jumbled pile of timber in the bottom of the stope. Too late he realized that all Deedee had to do was stoop and give the two-by-six a quick twist. Without shifting the torch from Ducray's face, Sadar flung his heavy carbide lamp with an underarm delivery. The flame shrilled. The lamp spun within inches of Deedee's head. It struck somewhere near the tender and went out.

The old man didn't flinch. He reached the plank and shuffled out, straight into the glare of the blinding shaft of light plastered against his face. His eyes were almost closed. His mouth was clamped hard. He held the black lever like a baseball bat and came on.

"Hold it, Deedee! I don't want to shoot you."

Ducray came on.

The plank would not hold two, Sadar knew. He went back as fast as he could until he reached solidity where the plank rested on a cap.

Neither coward nor idiot, Sadar had no wish to close with Ducray until he had to. That iron lever was eaten into black slabs but it still had weight. Even if he evaded it and got in close the struggle would pitch them both to the bottom of the stope.

He felt with his foot behind him for the next plank. He couldn't find it though he knew it was within inches. He kept the light on the white, set face coming toward him and groped with his toes; and still he couldn't find the plank, as a man who paws within inches of a light cord in the dark.

Sadar shifted feet and groped with the other one. He found the plank on the first try and knocked the end from its meager bearing on the cap. He heard the plank bumping its way down through the disrupted square sets.

Deedee hesitated a moment, sliding one foot carefully ahead. "Kicked the plank loose, did you?' he said.

"I don't want to shoot you, Deedee."

The old man paused. He moved his face from side to side as if to see around the glare that blinded him. "You ain't got a gun."

"Ben's gun, Deedee."

The old man slid his feet and came on.

Sadar put his forefinger near the back of the torch and snapped the nail against metal.

To his own ears the click was much too loud and didn't carry sharpness enough for a gun hammer.

But the sound stopped Deedee again, all the same.

Sadar never forgot the moment. He couldn't see enough of Deedee's eyes to read expression. The old man's mouth didn't move. For an eternity Ducray was motionless, the blackened bar of iron slanting past his set face.

Water dripped and splashed from the bulkhead.

"Didn't sound just right to me, that click," Deedee said.

He started moving again.

Sadar tensed himself to do the last thing he wanted to do: seize the narrow plank and jar Deedee off it. But that was all there was left.

Then Deede made a misstep. Perhaps he put one foot on the edge of the plank and turned his ankle outward. He lurched for balance a moment, shifting the Johnson bar before him. For a tick of time Sadar thought the old man would hold his position.

Deedee's lips flew wide over clenched teeth.

"My hip!" he groaned.

He fell from the plank so quickly that Sadar imagined for an instant that his beam still held that white, contorted face.

Sadar shifted the light toward the bottom of the stope just in time to see Deedee strike a cap halfway down. It took him squarely across the small of the back with the dull, solid thumping sound that the axle of a fast-moving automobile makes when it strikes a rabbit. Deedee whirled off the timber. His head struck the bottom of the stope first and was under his body when he came to final rest.

Somewhere in the blackness a huge slab fell from the wall with a jar that sent air concussion racing past Sadar. He wondered vaguely why the light didn't flicker.

It was still trained on Deedee's body, which didn't move.

BIFF-BIFF was huddled close to Ben when Sadar began to untie knots. He finally had to cut the rawhide.

"I didn't aim to blast you when I come out of that raise," Ben said.

"I know."

"What happened up there?" Ben asked. He got up with an effort.

Sadar told him everything.

Ben kept nodding his head slowly. At the end his deep voice was hollow. "I was afraid when you first come to Sylvanite. Deedee had told me he knew where the calaverite was, but that was all. When he got something in his head he was hell to turn. It was him that bossed blowing up the thugs years back. He planted the dynamite. But after he pulled you into that raise the day of the flood I got to wondering if I was wrong about what he might do. I didn't know about that arrow and the business at the Commander, and if I'd knowed the truth about how Sim got hurt, I'd've been through with the whole thing. I don't deny, though, that just taking the highgrade wouldn't have hurt my conscience a damn bit!"

He looked into velvety blackness up the bore. All his age showed. His eyes were dark blots and his jaw hung as if he lacked energy to close it. "You're sure he's dead?"

Sadar nodded. "I went down to him."

"I'll go up there and stay with him until you bring help. No matter what Deedee did, there wasn't a better partner in the whole world . . . the whole world . . ." Ben's deep voice rolled into darkness and fell to a hoarse whisper.

"You can clear out and nobody will know you had any part in this—can't prove it I mean." Sadar picked up the wet gun and gave it to Ben.

"I'll go up and stay with him."

As he started out the tunnel Sadar heard the heavy footsteps of an old man going the other way, going toward a vigil with loyalty.

Biff-Biff raced out of the bore ahead of Sadar and was waiting on the dump. Sadar breathed pure air, was grateful for the fresh coldness of the night. He started toward lights showing on the dump of Hibernian Number Three.

Ralston, Rouviere and Jackie were on

the dump when Sadar arrived. He heard Ralston say, "He went up the hill with a lamp, I tell you! I saw him take it from in front of the hotel."

Biff-Biff went bounding into the illumination of two carbide lamps. Ralston jumped sidewise. Rouviere grunted in alarm and said, "Now what in hell is that!"

The millionaire's harsh jaw never relaxed as he listened to Sadar's story. Midway in the account, Ralston became convinced and walked off into the night with a curse. He came back a few minutes later, bitter-faced as ever, and apologized to Sadar for trying to shoot him. The two men shook hands.

"My advice," Sadar told Rouviere, "is to get the stuff out of there tonight. After we get Deedee out I'll help with the calaverite as far as the tunnel level—and then to hell with it."

"Even the ten thousand-dollar reward Marcus Besse offered for its recovery?" Jackie asked. She looked at her father. "You wouldn't go back on your uncle's word, would you, Dad?"

"Who said I intended to?" Rouviere demanded in the manner of a man who has been insulted—or had his thoughts taken from his mind by someone else.

Ten thousand dollars, Sadar considered, would take care of Ben and Sim Tarwater and the Fire Horse Club nicely.

"I see an old friend of mine is missing from the party," Sadar said. "Where's Reeves?"

Rouviere looked at Jackie, then at Sadar. "Reeves is not with me any more. I suggested he leave town this evening, just before the Poker Festival. It took me—well, Jackie, rather, some time to discover definite proof of his mismanagement—"

"You mean downright stealing," Jackie said. "His bookkeeping was rather fancy, he used fake invoices and a few other items. He even sold the cigar store Indian and pocketed the money. Wooden Indians are a genuine collector's item, you know—"

"Did I?" Sadar asked. He thought a moment. "I'm sorry to see him go. I wanted to beat on him a little."

Rouviere's smile winked on and off. "So did I, but I'm not quite as young as you." He cleared his throat. "Speaking privately, I don't think the final tally will show too great a loss. Rather than face a few unpleasant legal proceedings I mentioned to him, he decided to deed me the Windlass Bucket and transferred a rather substantial bank account he had in Eldorado." His smile winked on, stayed quite a while before it faded.

"Mrs. Mahogany informed me about the crookedness of the Poker Festival," Rouviere said. "Just before I came up here this evening I straightened that out. I canceled the contract with those outside gamblers and put a local man in charge, a man who is honest and seems to know a little about games of chance—a Mr.—well, Jammer, they call him."

Under cover of petting Biff-Biff, Sadar concealed a huge smile.

"Let's start getting that calaverite out of there," Ralston said. "I'd like to see it."

THE END

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Obadiah

By WILLIAM WARNER GRAHAM

WITH the old clothesline hacked into a dozen twelve-inch lengths, Obadiah Job stood the woodaxe in a corner of the lean-to room, carried a snarl of ragged towsacks and the kerosene can outside.

"I wish to Gee you'd quit setting them brush fires!" came Myra's worried voice.

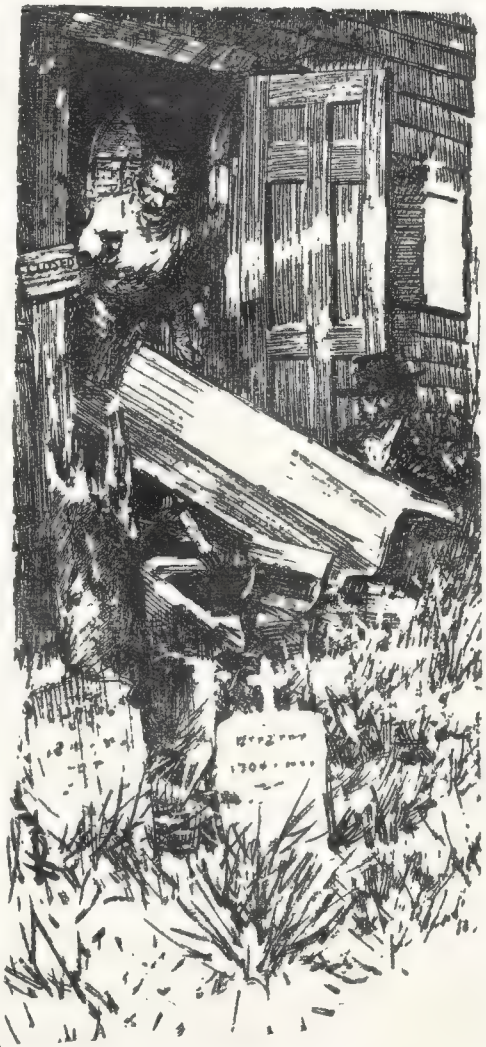
Obadiah scowled up vaguely. Eucalyptus trees shed curled patterns on the ground, live oaks crackled thirstily, but swamp cypresses behind the house held lacy green. He grinned.

"Got to do it, Myra—got to git them hymnbooks for the church."

"It frights me terrible, Obie!"

"Got my eye peeled," Obadiah said reassuringly, and with the ropes, towsacks saturated with kerosene, stowed in his pushboat lying at the swamp's margin, he called back, "Wait supper for me!" and shoved against the pole. Tall reeds spread snapping and the boat slid through moss shadows swaying on the oily surface of Big Run.

Obadiah was a slight, blue-eyed, ordinary-looking man, but the pulsing silence of the swamp made him feel big and strong and resolute, as he felt on Sunday behind the pulpit in the church; but when he tried to word this solemn grandeur, Myra vowed he was only dreaming. Myra cheered the house and kept the garden truck from shriveling. She vowed a preaching man belonged to dream a little but not the woman married to him.



ILLUSTRATED BY GERALD McCANN

INTERPRETS THE WORD

"Paid out two hundred for that organ!" Obadiah said hotly. "Ain't selling!"

Pushing down Big Run, Obadiah warily searched the distant wall of trees. County rangers had almost caught him firing scrub three years before; now he used rope fuses; by time the scattered fires took hold he would be halfway home. Skirting Bug Island's mangroved tip he landed on Big Slew Hammock, and in forty minutes had the towsacks laid in a dozen spots, the fuses lit. From the water now as he headed back, he saw smoke taint the sunset sky like storm clouds sucking up a blow.

"Fifteen bucks," he grinned, relieved, the amount Mr. Layton, who owned the church property at the road-fork, was paying for this burn. "Worth anyway ten times that much in spring cattle feed." Nobody knew who owned the land, or cared. With no boundary fences Mr. Layton's cattle wandered where feed grew best.

OBADIAH, up to ten years ago when he was thirty, had set scrub fires for anyone who had the cash. But since he'd married Myra and gone to preaching, he'd burned scrub to promote pasture only when the church needed something—comfortable benches for the congregation, lighting fixtures, colored windows, the pulpit, the organ Myra played. And he felt fine about it. Cattle scrawnied up and ailed on scrub and thorn, but with the useless coarse growth burned, prime pasturage sprouted magically and cattle sleekened. However, to be sure he had made doubly certain—carefully he double-checked it by the Word.

Psalms, 104-14: *He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle—that He may bring forth food out of the earth.*

That clinched it. Thus, humbly, Obadiah knew he helped the Lord.

But he was bothered now. And it wasn't Myra's worry or her asking, "If'n it's the Lord's way to git cattle feed, whyn't He burn off scrub Hisself?" He knew that answer: "You got to help the Lord." He was bothered by a text for Sunday's service.

Usually it was simple. Whenever a problem stumped him, all he had to do was clear his mind and say, "Gawd works in myst'rious ways His wonders to perform," and miraculously he had his text, or a solution for his problem. But oddly, now, he couldn't clear his mind. And it was Thursday. He had to have a text by Sunday.

"Gawd works in myst'rious ways . . ." He scowled. Tormentingly the text held off. Slipping down the shimmer of Big Run he spied Myra, her solid body planted against a bulbous cypress at the water's edge, and sensed trouble.

"Some'un out front to see you." The words came whistling over Myra's lower lip and Obadiah, sniffing the tell-tale smell of kerosene still lingering in the boat, hissed, "Who is it?"

"Never see 'em neither 'un before."

Moving cautiously around the house—two rooms and lean-to which Myra kept as spotless as Obadiah's Sunday shirt—he saw two people waiting.

The girl was redhaired, huge, but dwarfed beside the man whose egg-shaped head was colored like a weathered cypress block. Thick body, dangling hands. From deep flesh folds peered little bug-black eyes. Obadiah had never in his life seen a bigger, rougher man.

"Reckon you the Rev'rent!"

"I carry the Word," Obadiah acknowledged meekly.

"What word's that?" The man was instantly suspicious. "Ne'mind! I'm Ham Prussic from Mis'sippi and this here's my darter Belle!" Scorning the nice amenities of introduction, Prussic boomed, "Just bought that left fork piece of land off'n Jimmie Layton—where your church sets at! Going to run a juke-joint, build tourist cabins, put in eating tables, hire gels to wait!"

"Putting in a liquor-drinking bar," appended Belle. "Opening up weekend come next."

"A juke-joint in my—church?" gasped Obadiah.

"Hain't yourn now!" bawled Prussic. "Best git to toting your flamdoodle stuff out tomorrow—"

"Flamdoodle—stuff—!"

"Else I'll pitch it out myself!" warned Prussic glowering, and with Belle following strode toward the road.

Supper waited when Obadiah crept silently into the house. Lamplight glazed his dull, shocked eyes.

"Mr. Layton solt the—church," he said, stammering.

"I heared," Myra said. "Likely nothing to it," but she knew there was. "Clean ker'sene off'n your hands and set."

For ten years the church had been their very lives. Het-up, Obadiah preached a rousing sermon, but when worry nagged words seemed to fail him as they did now. The gilt-framed text hanging above the mantel caught Myra's eye.

"Just trust in the Lord," she said simply, poured coffee, heaped the plates. "Sidemeat, gravy and pertaters," she said brightly.

Obadiah scarcely pecked his food. Abruptly he pushed back, got up, yanked on his hat and headed for the door.

"Where you going, Obie?"

Obadiah's face was a strained, bitter mask. "Mr. Layton shan't sell the church propity!" he cried. "I'll tell him so! I favor him—git his cattle feed and he shan't—"

Violently the door banged shut and Myra sobbed.

TREES rose stark black and sinister at the outskirts of the village which lay neatly around the square. A block beyond the shadowed firehouse with its lone red truck, lighted windows in Mr. Layton's big house streaked the dreary darkness. Mr. Layton owned a thousand head of cattle, acres stacked on acres, and the church. And Obadiah, a humble man who spread the Word, felt his lips go dry as tinder.

Fearfully he peered back whence he'd come, and turned and started back. Then stopped. Was he going to give up without a fight? He had always fought the devil, scourged his handiwork, and clearly he recognized the devil's hand in this. Straight up the high porch steps he strode and punched the bell, then backed up, ready to light out.

When the door opened, rugs, chairs, looking-glasses spread down the gleaming hallway and Obadiah saw Mr. Layton, napkin in one hand, reach for his wallet.

"I'd of brought the money out, Job," he said amiably. "Saved you a trip. Fifteen bucks, wasn't it?"

Obadiah loosed a hoarse, suffocating sound and Mr. Layton's red face paled.

"Didn't have no trouble, did you?" He sucked sheer relief when Obadiah's head wagged loosely. "Whew! Upset me for a minute! Just eating supper. If that's all you wanted—"

It wasn't all or nearly all. Obadiah had to make Mr. Layton understand just how much the church meant to him, to Myra, to the congregation, to the entire community. But he could only choke. "Gawd works in myst'rious ways—" he choked, and primed, words gushed out like cistern water through a pump.

"You shan't sell the church propity to that Mis'sippi man to go spreading sin whereat ten years I preached the Word!"

Mr. Layton gawked. His eyeballs popped at the surprising outburst. And then he roared.

"It's sold a'ready! Got a down payment on it and'll git the rest when Prussic's running! Can't anybody do a living thing about it now!"

The door banged shut. Concrete was suddenly beneath Obadiah's feet, the porch floor topped his head. Violently he flung down the bills his fingers clutched and started running.

Lights faded, the firehouse loomed ahead. *Don't need no Sunday text now,* Obadiah thought, *nur hymnbooks neither,* and he shivered although the night was warm. Resentment flared inside him —not against Mr. Layton who didn't understand, but against himself because he'd failed miserably. He had lost his church, he would have to start again. He halted and turned back. *I fired that scrub,* he thought. *Ain't nobody else's money! A new church'll take money, more'n ever!*

Where he had flung the three crisp bills he found them. And trudging dully down the dark road he was almost home before he knew it. He didn't hesitate, but strode on, heading resolutely for the road-fork a quarter-mile ahead.

Creek water rippled sadly, a shadow loomed. Obadiah left the road. The warped church door in opening, moaned. *Needs fat on the hinges,* he thought drearily, and moved through the somber darkness unerringly to the pulpit bought six years before with money got for firing twenty acres for Lem Polk.

Gripping the pulpit's soft worn edges

desperately, Obadiah lifted up his eyes.

Myra, from the doorway, heard Obadiah's feet slap the road returning from the village and ached to call out cheerful, soothing words. When he had passed, she followed.

On Sundays for ten years they had gone this way to church with doves and mockingbirds singing in the sunlit foliage. Night sounds threatened now, strange fretted rustlings, muted warnings from the tangled undergrowth along the road.

Presently Myra pulled up, listening. The church door creaked. Letting her breath go whistling she crept into the church and from deep darkness heard a high voice praying, a strained voice filled with pained misunderstanding.

". . . ain't right, Lord, Your church snatched for sinful use! That Mis'sippi man, his redhead darter Belle—a Jezebel! Always figured to help You—reckon I got to git more faith!"

Myra's heart exulted at the wonder of the words.

". . . and do you give me the sign, show me how to whup that Mis'sippi man, that Jezebel—never shall I fire a patch of scrub ag'in!"

Silently Myra's lips worked in deep thankfulness.

". . . but does that Mis'sippi man, that Jezebel, run a juke-joint in my church—ain't threatening nobody, Lord, just making my solemn promise—I got to git another church whereat nobody knows and fix it up! It'll take money, a heap of money"—the strained voice rose frenziedly among the rafters—"and I'll burn scrub and I'll burn scrub, more'n I ever did. . ."

Myra, choking back her agony, crept out of the church.

Obadiah downed his breakfast zestfully. "Hang onto them fifteen bucks," he told Myra. "Might need them hymnbooks yet." He added gravely, "Got to study on that Sunday text."

"Best do less studying and git more faith."

"You got to help the Lord," Obadiah said and left the house.

Formerly a crossroads store, the church sat on cleared ground beside the steep-banked creek. When Obadiah reached it, men, spurred on by Prussic's bellowed threats, were stacking lumber from a truck, so he leaned against a post-oak at the roadside and waited for a sign.

At once a Ford pulled up. Mr. Layton got out, crossed to where the spraddle-legged Mississippi man howled violent orders. He waved to Obadiah. Obadiah wandered over. It might be the sign.

"Reckon you know Prussic here," said Mr. Layton.

"Morning," said Obadiah hopefully.

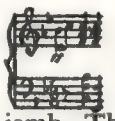
"Hain't got your flamdoodle stuff out'n that shack yet!" Prussic said and, whirling, shouted, "Th'ow out them benches, that pulpit!" and whirled back. "I'll take that old pipe pianner off'n your hands! Go good with the juke-box I got coming! Ten bucks cold cash!"

Obadiah gasped. The hoarse way Prussic shouted pained him, but the agonizing thought of his beloved organ playing second fiddle to a blatting juke-box whipped up a somnolent ferocity.

"Paid out two hundred for that organ!" he said hotly. "Ain't selling!"

"Th'ow that there pipe pianner out!" Prussic bawled, the ox-blood in his face spewing violently back and forth.

Obadiah's lips moved soundlessly as a rending racket sounded from the church.



FIRST came the benches, one upon another, scraping through the doorway. Next the pulpit cracked the doorjamb. Then the organ, paid for by nine scrub fires, and was it beautiful. Pearly keys, a glossy shine. Myra loved the organ, and Obadiah could hear its rich tones swelling in his heart as she vigorously pumped the pedals. It would have crucified her now to see it, thumping, bumping down the steps, each bump pain, each thump agony to Obadiah.

"Take keer that organ!" he howled wildly, and Prussic bellowed, "Th'ow it out!"

As it thumped the ground a mournful wail erupted from its tortured vitals, and Obadiah froze. His organ had cried out to him, had cried for help in desperation, and he crouched down tight, eyes pressed tight shut, and prayed. And then he leaped—straight for Prussic's hairy back he leaped and clawed a hold. Although his aim was good, his judg-

ment was poor for the Mississippi man was a veritable hurricane in action.

"By gooberdam!" roared Prussic in astonishment, and heaved, and Obadiah, like a catapulted stone sailed off to take Mr. Layton with him to the ground where he dug in gouging, kicking, clawing, and Mr. Layton suffered for his sins.

"Hop onto me!" howled Prussic, yanking Obadiah brutally to his feet. He heaved mightily and Obadiah, spinning outward, downward past the steep creek bank, split the water with a resounding splash. "Nobody bucks Ham Prussic! Next time I'll use my shotgun!"

Sunday came and passed. Five frame cabins rose up beside the church. While Obadiah dully thumbed his Bible, couples came to visit—the church's congregation.

Women spoke tight-lipped about the evil in their midst. Big men whispered slyly about juke-joint dancing, bold girls flirting brazenly on the old church floor. The church turned strong men from temptation, but without a church the devil got a toehold. Obadiah talked to them.

Mysteriously the organ, benches, pulpit disappeared one night. Prussic swore the colored windows and lighting fixtures went with the building and he meant to keep them. But one morning all eight windows were missing from their frames and Prussic wrathfully set a guard. Next morning, Thursday, the pineboard walls were nude of lighting fixtures and the guard found, dead drunk, wallowing in the creek. Raving and ranting Prussic covered the countryside but could find no trace of anything. That night with his shotgun he sat guard himself, sworn to blast the lights and liver out of any trespasser.

Obadiah rallied. In his humble way he had built up as staunch and resolute a congregation as one could find.

But as Sunday neared again he seemed to shrivel up. Only once did Myra hear him mutter fretfully, "Gawd works in myst'rious ways—" Without a church what use a text?

Saturday, when Obadiah was brooding in the lean-to room, Mr. Layton drove up in his Ford. Inside the house, Myra listened.

"That hundred acres other side of Big Slew Hammock needs burning, Job," said Mr. Layton. "Joins my land. Got some new beef coming in and need spring pasture. Worth fifty bucks."

It was a cruelly tempting offer. A new church would need many things. It would be an easy job this hot, dry weather.

"Ain't fixing to burn no scrub for you," Obadiah said.

Mr. Layton cleared his throat. "Needn't git riled, Job. I jumped at selling the church property because I figured it was the only offer I'd ever git. Fifty bucks is *fifty bucks.*"

"Save fifty bucks," Obadiah said. "Burn her yourself."

"Just what I used to do when I was starting out," said Mr. Layton candidly. "Scrub don't burn itself and a man can't set around and see his cattle starve. They got to eat—like humans. Way I figure, a man's got to help things happen."

Myra heard Obadiah say uneasily, "I'll study on it."

"You'll see my way," said Mr. Layton and he left.

At supper, Myra said, "I'm heartsick you ain't eating."

"Ain't hongry."

He thumbed his Bible, then went outside to the lean-to room from which, presently, came unmistakable, tell-tale sounds. Myra peeped. Clutching the wood-axe wrathfully, O b a d i a h was whacking old clothesline into ragged twelve-inch lengths.

He's beat, thought Myra helplessly. *He's going to set them fires. . .*

"Be back terectly," came Obadiah's voice.

Waiting, Myra crawled into bed when darkness fell but she visioned frightful things and couldn't sleep—although she pretended to when Obadiah crept in two hours later. Clothes scratched a chair, the mattress gave, and she caught the sweetish, soothing smell of kerosene. . .

A HARSH screech jerked her wide-eyed. Creeping to the door she cracked it. Down the black road came the roaring, clanging village fire truck. It tore past. Beyond, she saw, the north sky was rosy red.

"Obie—Obie! A fire's burning down the road!"

He crouched beside her. "Is, ain't it!" He pulled on shirts and jeans. "I'll take a look-see."

When darkness gulped him Myra, shivering, thought, *If it's them cabins*—and heard the distant fire truck's siren scream, seeing in her mind's eye men pulling at the hose, ending it in the creek, water spewing on the fire to quench it. And as though drawn by some mysterious force her look went to the text above the mantel: *TRUST IN THE LORD.* Myra had always trusted and she always would but it was cruelly hard to wait, and all at once she wondered if only trusting was enough. And it came to her what Obadiah had always said: "You got to help the Lord."

She grabbed a breath. In her long nightgown she ran outside and to the rear, then hit a furious and determined pace down the road.

The cabins were blazing brightly when Obadiah reached them. People ran past shouting. Prussic, bawling threats, urged others into danger. Bells shrieked madly at the licking flames. The fire truck's motor roared, the hose bulged, a stream of water leaped from its nozzle into the cherry flames, sending red-tinged smoke aloft. The fires would be put out without great damage to the cabins and Prussic would have his juke-joint running in no time.

Obadiah knew defeat. But desperately he tried one last resort. "Gawd works in myst'rious ways—" he murmured fervently, and instantly was deluged with water.

He gasped, leaping backward, and he couldn't credit what he saw. No water spewed now from the fire hose which lay deflated on the road, a lifeless serpent. It had broken somehow, and the hungry flames licked higher in the night.

Obadiah reached home breathless and Myra, quivering, watched him from the bed. "That miracle!" he cried, his face alight. "I got to tell it, Myra—got to clear my mind!"

"What—Obie?"

"After I'd et supper I started out to fire that scrub for Mr. Layton. I'd give up cold and was soul-bitter and I shoved my boat down Big Run. Them trees and whispering water—the swamp got me, Myra, made me feel big and solemn, like in church. And it come to me, a sign!"

"What was it, Obie?"

"Job, 15-34:" Thumbing the old Bible, Obadiah read, "*'For the congr'gation of hyp'crites shall be des'late, and fire shall consume the—the tab'nacles of brib'ry'!* I int'rpt'ed it! Prussic was fixing to bribe my congr'gation with his juke-joint—make 'em hyp'crites to do the devil's work and fire would destroy that—tab-'nacle of brib'ry!"

"It's the Lord's pure work!" Myra cried.

"It is, sure nuff! How else you figure I ain't kilt?"

"Kilt—"

"Me sticking them fire starters in them cabins square under Prussic's nose whilst he guarded with his shotgun—"

"Obie—*you set them fires*—"

"And that old hose busting!" Obadiah cried. "A miracle!"

"Obie!" Myra was off the bed now and her words came whistling. "I seen the Lord's hand plain in them fires, but the devil hisself sent that fire truck! When you run out I visioned things and it come to me—like you always say, 'You got to help the Lord.' I got tired of waiting, too. And something caught me up, took me to the lean-to room and down the road. Then cabins was burning fine till that water got to going! I prayed but that water kept on going! And something big took sudden holt on me, lifted up my arms above my head and brought 'em down—*kerchop!* It was that something, Obie, that big myst'rious something inside me made me chop that fire hose six times with the wood-axe!"

Obadiah choked, "*You*—chopped that hose—" He reared erect. "It's proof!" he cried ecstatically. "Wouldn't some believe it, maybe, but Prussic and that redhead Jezebel lighting out for Mis'sippi in the morning and Mr. Layton just telling me the church was our'n ag'in *proves* we done right and helped the Lord! And it just popped into my head!"

"Popped—what popped, Obie?"

"That Sunday text. . ."

"What text you going to preach on?"

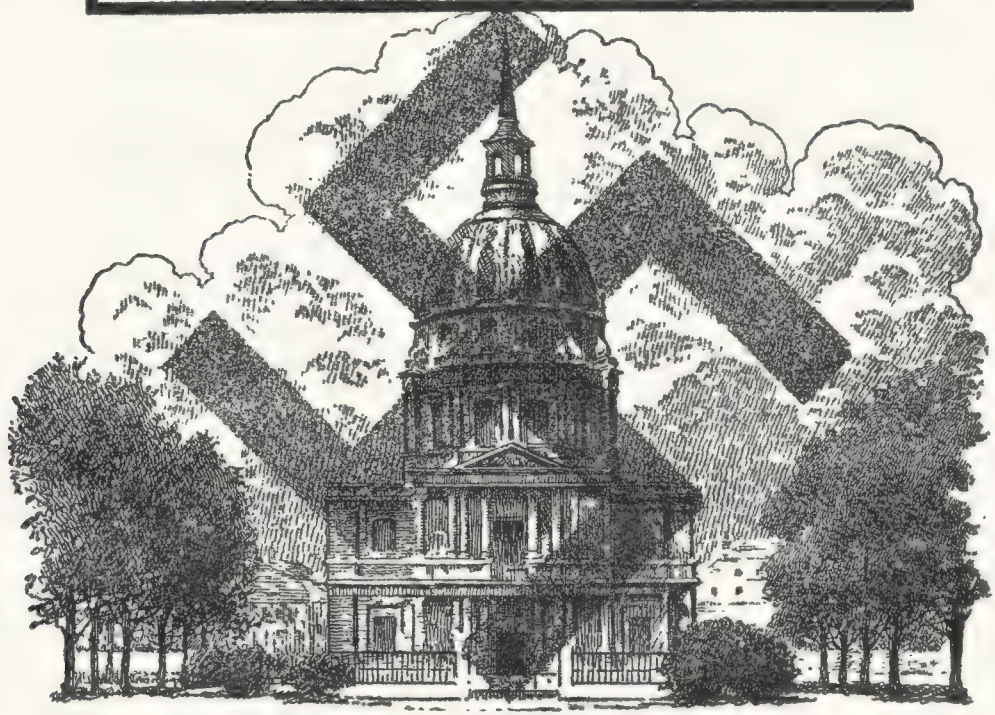
"Gawd works in myst'rious ways," triumphantly proclaimed Obadiah Job, "His wonders to perform!"

EAGLE'S DUST

A FACT STORY

By

GEORGES SURDEZ



How symbolic it would be—Napoleon and his son reunited by Hitler, resting side by side in the middle of Paris!

ON THE 5th of May 1821, a pudgy man five feet six inches in height, a few months short of his fifty-second birthday, breathed his last after suffering for several years from a disease of the liver. He had been born on an island in the Mediterranean Sea and he died on a smaller island lost in the Atlantic Ocean. The son of an obscure, needy country gentleman, he had become the greatest general in recorded history, Emperor of the French and the most famous figure of all time without claim to divine origin: Napoleon I.

He had presided at the massacre of a generation, supervised the ruin of a continent, his long and bloody campaigns had shortened the average height of Frenchmen by some two inches, yet this Corsican of Genoese ancestry, born French by the merest chance, was the idol of millions of Frenchmen. Every-

DECORATION BY L. STERNE STEVENS

thing about him smacks of the legend, was and remains prodigious—he dominates even his defeat, for Waterloo does not evoke victory but disaster and in losing he overshadows his lucky conqueror, Wellington.

Men believed in him with blind, unshakable faith. While he was alive, thousands of men all over the globe plotted to rescue him. At the very time he died, a private frigate, *La Seraphine,* was being fitted out in New Orleans for that purpose. And long after his death, the legend lingered that he would some fine day land on the French coast, as he had done once before, to lead his old soldiers to victory once more.

It was perhaps to still those rumors that the Royal Government decided to bring his body back to Paris and to bury it with all honors and ceremonies at Les Invalides. Thus, Napoleon I was granted his last wish, "to be buried among the French people I so dearly loved."

The great man had left an heir, a legitimate son, Napoleon Francois-Joseph, Napoleon II to be, King of Rome during his babyhood, then an Austrian archduke—the legendary Eaglet, the Duke of Reichstadt. That eaglet seems to have been a rather pathetic, puny little birdling, whose lungs gave out when he had scarcely attained manhood. However, there is a legend about him, propagated if not wholly created, by romantic French writers, that he had grown to know, admire and love his father. Rostand crystallized this creed forever in a masterpiece, *L'Aiglon.*

The Eaglet was buried near Vienna in 1832.

A century after the return of Napoleon I's body to Paris, Paris was occupied by the German Army. The French Army, then reputed the finest in Europe, had cracked and shattered under the impact of modern striking forces. As a German prince had said long before, the French Army had been ready for the preceding war. France was out of the game. But Great Britain, behind a few miles of sea, was holding out. Germany wanted the support of Frenchmen as well as that of the Vichy Government.

Hitler was a superb psychologist, but a German psychologist. He knew that the French were quixotic in certain respects, he considered them emotional fools and as easy to trick as children; he had some justification for that belief—one man, Ferdonnet, under German guidance, had poisoned a whole nation with speeches over the radio. He sought for the grand gesture that would appeal to their imagination, something that would cost very little and cause an immense stir.

Who was the illustrious idol of French history, the symbol of victory and greatness?

Napoleon I, of course, of course.

Something flattering to the French national ego, something connected with Napoleon? Ah, the Eaglet—he could give them back the Eaglet. And that would have an additional edge, too—father and son had been victims of the rapacity, the scheming of perfidious Albion. How symbolic it would be—father and son reunited by Hitler, resting side by side in the middle of Paris!

So the Duke of Reichstadt was returned to his good city of Paris, where his birth had been celebrated with volleys of cannon and ringing of bells on March 20th, 1811, a century to the day after his father had been laid away, on the 15th day of December 1940.

THE ceremonies were solemn. There was an official proclamation, bearing the portraits of Napoleon I and Napoleon II, and a text signed by Pierre Costantini, Chief of the French League. It was written in French, but it might as well have been written in German, so obvious was its propaganda purpose. A few passages show the full subtlety and delicate tact of the document:

"The centuries pass . . . the great thought of Napoleon—United Europe—is reborn in the sacred conjunction of these ashes. . . . The White Archduke rests from now on with his father, under the Dome of the Invalides, symbol of peace between France and Germany, point of departure for a reconciled Europe.

"Chloroformed by the Judeo-Masonic governments in the service of England, we had forgotten even the grandeur of our History—by his *simple and grandiose gesture* Adolf Hitler recalls it to us. From Dunkirk to Ajaccio, cradle of the Em-

peror, the French, sensitive to *noble gestures*—

"England can quibble, but the fact is there, decisive."

Old Man Petain, poor, senile doll lashed to the bridge of a sinking ship, was invited to preside at the ceremonies. Declining an invitation issued by Herr Hitler in France at that time was dangerous. But there were some things the old chap could not swallow, some things that still struck a spark of resistance. He declined the invitation.

But he had to send a message, an acknowledgment. He did. But the style is far from enthusiastic, evidences reluctance. He evidently gagged at using the expression *noble gesture*—possibly because he was a Frenchman, knew that his countrymen had pride and a sense of humor.

He wrote: "Parisians! On the 15th of December 1840, the Prince de Joinville brought back to France the remains of the Emperor.

"On the 15th of December 1940, the ashes of his son were placed beneath the Dome of the Invalides, beside Vauban, Turenne and Foch.

"The Eagle and the Eaglet sleep today side by side.

"I thank Chancellor Hitler, Supreme Chief of the German Armies, for having, a hundred years after the return from Saint-Helena, permitted the return from Vienna."

It will be noted that he could not have written less. He states facts, and he thanks Hitler in his own name, not—and those points count—as head of the French State, and he takes care to refer to him as "Supreme Chief of the German Armies"—and the German Armies had licked the French Armies, and what the devil could one do about that?

Hitler settled back confidently to await the reaction of Frenchmen: Had he not, in a *simple* and *grandiose* gesture, given them back their Eaglet? Frenchmen would force their Government to declare war against England, of course. It couldn't miss, he had appealed to French patriotism, to French vanity, to French sentimentality.

They were suckers for glory, suckers for flattery—

But more and more Frenchmen, who did not seem particularly impressed at the reunion of the Eaglet and his father, joined the Resistance Movement. The soldiers of the Great Man who had paid tribute to a Great Man, were attacked, the attackers not caring for the body of the White Archduke more than for their own ignoble living carcasses. Long before the middle of 1944, Hitler must have realized that Operation Eaglet had laid an egg.

Caboose Hops—

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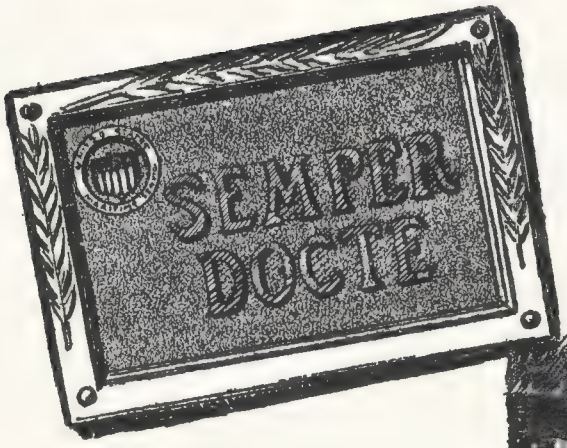

ILLUSTRATED BY
V. E. FYLES

"Now," Captain Adamson said with cold fury, "before you pack your bags, maybe you'll explain—if you can."

IT LOOKED to Chief Officer Hallet as if Mr. Elkins, the new third assistant engineer, was blessed with the Midas touch. Only it was in reverse and it wasn't gold. It even appeared as if the youngster's fateful fingers were going to play havoc with the affairs of the *Ceranto* itself, although in all fairness to Mr. Elkins, Hallet admitted grudgingly, the fortunes of the old tramp freighter were almost always teetering on the uncertain edge of catastrophe even before he shipped aboard.

The mate, stirring coffee in the saloon mess, saw him first, but not in time to prevent the brash Mr. Elkins' initial blunder of knocking at the Old Man's cabin. Captain Adamson was not one to take kindly to interruption, particularly during his post-meridian nap, so Mr. Hallet's mouth, opened in dismay, closed again soundlessly as the newcomer's knuckles fell unsuspectingly on the door.

Mr. Elkins naively mistook the ireful rumble from within to be a sign of admittance. He turned the knob and said,

By

STEVE HAIL

A MOTTO FOR THE SKIPPER

"I'm the engineer you ordered from Honolulu, sir. Got into Hilo this morning and taxied right down here to Kaluna."

Captain Adamson rolled to a dimpled elbow and jerked his singlet from where it was festooning the bunk lamp. He swabbed sweat deliberately from all of his chins while his half closed eyes measured the slight figure in the doorway. His gaze angled slowly upward over the starched white uniform to the delicate, pink features and finally to the eager eyes that looked back at him through rimless glasses.

"So," Captain Adamson said disarmingly, "you're the new third?" His sock-clad feet swung over the bunk rail to the deck, and when he spoke again the quilted fat of his bare midriff shook to the accompanying reverberation of his voice. "Then what the hell are you doing here!" he roared.

Mr. Elkins paled. He swallowed once, audibly, and said, "This is the *Ceranto,* isn't it, sir? They told me at the hiring hall that the first assistant couldn't sail, that the second was moving up to first, and the third—"

Captain Adamson stabbed his legs into trousers. Whether it was due to Mr. Elkins' patent confusion, or to the dubious dignity lent by the tarp size pants, the captain's tone moderated a decibal. "Mister," he growled, "what they didn't tell you at the hall was that the third busted his leg on the fiddley ladder this morning and is in the hospital. And that the first is in the clink for making a pass at a hapa-haole barmaid and will be there for ten days."

He fumbled for the zipper, hidden by the horizon of his paunch. "We're taking a full cargo of sugar out of here. It loads fast. We're sailing for the coast in the morning. Now why are you bothering me? Report to the chief and go to work."

"I—I tried to, sir," Mr. Elkins stammered, "but—"

Mr. Hallet, feeling a twinge of pity for anybody foolish enough to hire out as nurse girl to the bucket of bolts and baling wire that passed for the *Ceranto's* engine, interrupted.

"The chief's in his room, sir," he said hesitantly. "It's locked. He's drunk. Sailing day ritual of his if you remember, sir. He'll come to about three days out."

Mr. Elkins beamed gratefully. "Yes, sir. And I—"

"Shut up!" Captain Adamson snapped, reverting to his earlier mood. He squinted frostily at the other's neat uniform. "Right off the schoolship are you?"

"Oh no, sir," Mr. Elkins answered proudly. "I've been out several months. I made a trip on a passenger vessel. The *Samoan,* and—"

The captain's eyes fastened on Mr. Hallet's in a stricken look, then rolled upward prayerfully. "Lord help us," he said fervently, "to get from here to there! A tourist!"

"Well, sir," Mr. Elkins said with dignity. "I'm not unintelligent. I'm sure I can learn the eccentricities of the *Ceranto's* power plant. That was the schoolship's motto, sir. *Semper Docte.* Always learn. All I need is experience and—"

"Then climb out of them fancy pretties!" Captain Adamson exploded wrathfully. "You'll get it on here. Lots of it. Now get below and start learning. I want that mill turning over at daylight."

WHEN Mr. Elkins had taken his leave, hurt, and stumbling in his haste, Captain Adamson spigoted himself a cup of coffee and spoke bitterly to his chief officer. "It isn't bad enough we got to sail shorthanded down below, but we draw this half-baked schoolboy for a replacement. He burns anything up on that engine and our profit for the ship goes *phtt.*" Captain Adamson went *phtt.* "God knows it's slim enough picking as it is."

"We could radio Honolulu for another man," Mr. Hallet suggested, not too hopefully.

"Sure!" The captain looked at his mate pityingly. "And he wouldn't get here before noon tomorrow. That'd give the underwriter's agent more'n enough time to drive from Hilo and check on our sailing draft. Uh-uh. We're leaving before daylight, just in case."

Mr. Hallet understood the skipper's desire for an early departure. The *Ceranto,* operating without the advantages of the larger steamship lines, had to sail with

every square foot of cargo space filled, even the shelter deck, that separate compartment directly over the engine room that wasn't a hold, but merely an enclosed area bulkheaded off from the main deck.

Their risk, Mr. Hallet knew, lay in the fact that once this additional space was shoe-horned with the extra hundred or so tons of sugar, the *Ceranto* would be below her allowed marks by a foot or more. That in itself would invalidate any insurance claims the vessel might incur in case of accident. Not only that, it would mean a heavy fine, if not a disallowance of clearance papers, if it was discovered.

Captain Adamson's strategy, Hallet had learned from long experience, was to see that it wasn't discovered. That was his reason for always sailing at odd hours and from some obscure outport such as Kaluna. Inspection was lax. By the time they had raised the mainland, two thousand odd miles later, they would have burned enough fuel from their tanks to bring the Plimsoll marks up to a legal level.

The captain blew thoughtfully on his coffee. "How's the loading coming, Mr. Hallet?" he asked anxiously.

"They're topping off number two and five holds, sir. We'll be battened down and starting on the shelter deck by midnight."

Adamson grunted. "Better check on the watertight doors then, and have the first assistant fix that leaking flange in the fire line that runs through there. We can't afford to have a pipe let go and wet that sugar. With an overload like this we'd never collect damages."

Down in the engine room the mate found Elkins protesting mildly to O'Hara, the acting and harried first. The subject appeared to be the very one Hallet had come to see about.

"But," Mr. Elkins was saying, "the line needs an entire new section. The joint is cracked, and the pipe itself is nearly rusted through. Why, on the *Samoan*—"

O'Hara wiped a grimed hand wearily across a grimier face. "Look, sonny," he explained, not too patiently, "this hooker is not the *Samoan*. It'd be worth me job to break out any new pipe. Why, when the chief sobered up and found out . . . Now here, take this can o' white lead, a strip o' canvas and some o' this fine new baling wire along wid ye and patch it up. There'll be no pressure on that line anyways till the Steamboat Inspector boards us in Frisco. Captain Adamson is very careful about his fire drills."

"But, I've learned that if—"

"Stop y o u r blatherin'!" O'Hara barked. "You've learned nothin' till ye've made a trip on the *Ceranto*. Now git along wid ye. I've work to do on the transfer pump."

Mr. Hallet grinned appreciatively to himself and tip-toed back into the working alleyway.

The new third assistant was in good hands.

He wasn't grinning, though, the next morning when the *Ceranto* was two hours and eighteen nautical miles out of Kaluna for the mainland. Neither was Captain Adamson. The peak of Mauna Kea was just a blurred blue pimple astern, and the pathway to stateside had suddenly become a crazy zigzag across the white-capped saucer of water ahead. But the question of the moment was, which way was ahead. The *Ceranto* circled and meandered drunkenly while the helmsman stared stupidly at the useless wheelspokes he gripped in his hands.

"She don't answer, sir," he informed Adamson needlessly.

The captain swore, and uncapped the voice tube to the engine room with a pudgy paw. An oiler's frightened voice came back in answer to his bellowed question.

"Steam line let go on the steering engine, sir. Mr. O'Hara and Mr. Elkins have gone aft to fix it. I—"

The thunderclap of the voice tube being closed at the bridge end of the line terminated the conversation.

"Get back to the poop, Mr. Hallet," Captain Adamson ordered, "and rig the emergency gear till they get that steam line glued together—or whatever'n hell they do with broken steam lines. And on your way aft pry the chief loose from his bunk if you have to use a fire axe. With that Elkins running loose down below anything can happen."

THE mate returned to the bridge a quarter of an hour later, with his mission half accomplished. The emergency steering gear was working. The chief engineer wasn't.

"He's got the fire axe you suggested in his room," Mr. Hallet explained ruefully. "He's swinging it. At snakes, he says. I got out. He's got three or four bottles left. He's good for a couple of days yet."

Captain Adamson glowered. "Well," he admitted grudgingly, after awhile, "I guess things could be worse. We could have been caught sailing from Kaluna with our marks under. Leave us be thankful for small favors." His eyes fastened on the radioman hurrying toward them along the boat deck. There was a fluttering communications blank in the operator's hand.

"Weather," the captain guessed. "It better be good."

It wasn't the weather, and it wasn't good. Mr. Hallet read its contents over the plump hill of the captain's shoulder. It was from the *Ceranto's* San Francisco agent. It said: LONGSHOREMAN STRIKE EFFECTIVE HERE THIS MORNING. EARLY SETTLEMENT DOUBTFUL. PROCEED HONOLULU AND WAIT FURTHER ORDERS.

The weight of the captain's chins appeared to drag his jaw downward. "No," he said almost tearfully. "No!"

The profound implications of the message gradually struck home. The master and mate looked at each other in stricken silence. This re-routing to Honolulu, only a hundred or so miles distant, meant they were trapped with their Plimsoll marks under. The negligible amount of oil they would burn on the short passage wouldn't raise the *Ceranto's* hull an inch out of water, much less a foot. And in Honolulu, an official port of entry, there would be a well-staffed and efficient force of inspectors to ferret out their chicanery.

"Maybe," Mr. Hallet suggested finally, "we could pump enough bunker oil overboard to lighten her."

"Sure," Captain Adamson said bitterly. "At two dollars a barrel we dump our fuel oil! Better to take a chance on a stiff fine or a suspension of my license. Any way you look at it we're in a spot."

Mr. Elkins stumbled up the bridge ladder. His pink cheeks had grayed and were lined with fatigue. His nose was smudged with grease. One sleeve hung in tatters, revealing a raw burn from elbow to shoulder. His glasses were gone, but in their place were two unquenchable sparks of eagerness.

"You may hook up your steering engine, Captain," he reported triumphantly. "We've repaired the line. I'm glad to say, too, sir, that I'm beginning to fathom the working of things down below. I'm learning. *Semper Docte.*" He cleared his throat. "Just as well I am, sir, now that Mr. O'Hara has met with an accident."

Captain Adamson's jaw didn't sag this time. It bulged. "Mr. O'Hara you say? An accident?"

"Yes, sir. He was in the escape hatch trying to bolt the new section of pipe in place. He slipped, and fell into the shaft alley. I think it's broken ribs, sir. Several of them. We got him to his bunk."

Captain Adamson passed a shaking hand across his eyes. Strange mutterings bubbled from his throat. Only the realization that now he was wholly dependent on this schoolboy stayed his poised foot as the third assistant turned his back invitingly and started down the ladder. The captain controlled himself with true executive restraint. "Can—can you keep her running for another twenty hours, Mr. Elkins?" he grated. "Till we reach Honolulu?"

"Honolulu, sir? Are we in trouble?"

"No, Mr. Elkins," the captain said with heavy sarcasm. "We figure they might need a shipload of sugar there. We—we—"

The gurgling and the apoplectic hue rising in Captain Adamson's neck warned the third. He *was* learning. He left.

The captain passed the revised course to the helmsman and stared morosely ahead as the *Ceranto* came around to her northerly heading. "Any suggestions, Mr. Hallet?" he inquired at last, when he was able to speak.

The mate rubbed at a crease between his eyes.

"We might jettison enough sacks, sir, to bring her up to her marks. Blame it on the weather. Safety of the ship and

all that. The underwriters might pay off."

Captain Adamson shook his head, and waved a hand at the small seas rippling past under the gentle impetus of the Northeast Trades. "Flying fish weather," he said. "We'd never make it stick. Anyway it would be admitting we were overloaded."

He paced the bridge wing with the preoccupied mien of a lethargic porpoise. Finally he sighed and said, "All we can do, mister, is dock as soon as possible—we can enter at sunrise—and begin discharging the shelter deck immediately into storage. With luck—" the captain winced—"with luck we'll have her high enough out of the water before the inspectors board us."

THE *Ceranto* docked at eleven minutes after official sunrise, something of a record in that the distance from the entrance buoy to the unloading berth was the better part of a mile. Credit for the speed of the maneuver belonged in part to Mr. Elkins at the throttle. He experienced some little difficulty with the reversing gear.

Captain Adamson picked himself up from where he'd been thrown by the impact of the landing. "Get Number Three gear winged out, Mr. Hallet," he rasped, rubbing at a bruised buttock. "I'll step ashore and arrange for stevedores, and make a survey of the damage to the wharf— and our stem."

The mate reluctantly loosed his strangle hold on the binnacle stand, and glanced aft to Number Three. "Gear's already swung out, sir," he said, shuddering at the sight. He sighed. "I guess a new guy pendant or two will put it in working order."

On his way below, Captain Adamson, followed closely by Mr. Hallet, found the gangway blocked by a grim-visaged individual wearing the gold stripes of a Coast Guard commander. Beside him, standing with arms akimbo, was another man, not in uniform but clothed with a similar austerity of manner.

"Good morning, gentlemen," the three striper greeted the *Ceranto's* officers. "Name's Benton. Steamboat Inspector. This is Mr. Axelblad, American Bureau Surveyor. Sorry we missed you down Kaluna way." He fixed an icy eye on Adamson. "When were you inspected last, Captain?"

"Ulp," Captain Adamson gulped unhappily.

"I thought so," Benton said grimly. "That's why we're here early. Learned of your arrival by radio. Afraid you might disappear again before we got around to you." He laughed. There was nothing humorous in the sound. "Now, if you'll be kind enough, Captain, to muster all hands for fire and boat drill, Mr. Axelblad here can give me a hand before he checks your draft against your load line certificate."

He raised a hand to Captain Adamson's weak objections. "Tut, Captain, no trouble at all," he said with a venomous smile. "Man all your fire stations, if you please, and inform your engineer I want a full hundred pounds pressure on the line."

A strangled cough from the direction of the inshore alleyway announced the unnoticed presence of Mr. Elkins. "A—a hundred pounds, sir?" the third choked, staring wildly from the commander to Captain Adamson.

The captain turned, intruding his broad bulk between the inspector and the *Ceranto's* assistant engineer. "Of course, Mr. Elkins," he said chidingly. "That's regulation. A hundred pounds." His hands, screened from the official visitors by his bulbous 'midship section, made frantic motions.

Mr. Elkins regarded his superior officer with frank astonishment. Then gradually his frown dissolved into round-mouthed understanding.

"Yes, sir," Mr. Elkins said, swallowing. "A hundred pounds. Yes, sir!" He started back down the alleyway toward the engine room.

Captain Adamson swung around to the inspectors, his hands clasped benignly across his stomach. There was no sign that a moment before one of them had been spread fanwise, with all five fingers spread outward. Or that the other had joined thumb and forefinger into a plump but clearly discernible figure O.

Captain Adamson himself closed the switch on the general alarm bell in the wheelhouse to signal the beginning of

the drill. Within moments hoses were squirming across the Ceranto's decks like soiled worms, and throwing discreet streams of water to the harbor's surface.

The captain watched blandly as the two inspectors made their rounds. He smiled knowingly at Mr. Hallet. The *Ceranto's* antiquated equipment was standing up nicely, thanks to Mr. Elkins' careful throttling of the fire pump.

The mate hoped aloud that no one would think to go below and examine the pressure gauge.

"Nonsense," Captain Adamson scoffed. "And that Elkins, now. He's got the makings of a good engineer. Quick to learn. He . . ."

His expansive appreciation of the third assistant's sterling qualities faded off to stunned silence as sudden panic broke loose on the foredeck. A hose at the masthouse, heretofore pulsating placidly, stiffened, writhed wildly as the seaman lost control, then burst like a ripped sack with a loud and thankful hiss of released pressure.

Nearby, Commander Benton's jaw plummeted downward, not so much in surprise as at the shock from the geyser of cold water that caught him dead amidships.

Captain Adamson groaned and covered his eyes. It was just as well. It spared him the sight of another hose on the foc'slehead spouting water like an incensed whale. It didn't prevent him, though, from hearing the yell of alarm as the seaman dropped it, or the mad tattoo of the nozzle hammering the deck plates as the hoseman leaped for his life.

But it was the tell-tale trembling of the wheelhouse deck itself that finally brought Captain Adamson to action.

"That pump!" he shouted at no one in particular. "That crazy third has opened her up!" He leaped for the voice tube.

His only answer was the rhythmic and defiant thump of Mr. Elkins' auxiliary.

Captain Adamson turned an empurpled face to the mate. "Get below!" he roared. "Get down there and stop that madman!"

Mr. Hallet's paralyzed limbs, voice and equanimity all returned at once. "Yes, sir," he said.

He ran for the ladder.

AT THE first jangle of the alarm bell, Mr. Elkins had started the pump, cracked the valve gently as befitted a conscientious engineer, and fed pressure to the fire system. He built it up slowly, a watchful eye on the gauge, until the needle climbed, quivered and steadied on the fifty-pound mark. Mr. Elkins squirted a dash of oil at a warming bearing, wiped his glasses and settled back to await the bell that would signify the end of the drill.

Oddly enough, the drop of moisture that had clouded his glasses didn't wipe off. Mr. Elkins applied the tip of his tongue to the offending blot and rubbed the lens clean. There was a puzzled furrow between his eyes as he hooked the rimless frames back over his ears. Another droplet splatted the back of his neck. Mr. Elkins stared long and thoughtfully at the blank bulkhead.

After awhile he walked across the engine room, started the bilge pump, came back again to the fire auxiliary, hesitated a brief second, then with a sigh opened it wide.

He was standing there with an enigmatic smile on his lips and a satanic spark in his eye when Mr. Hallet plumped to the floorplates from the third rung of the ladder.

There was fire in the mate's eye that wasn't a part of the drill. "Stop that infernal pump!" he bellowed. "You want to ruin us? You've busted every fire hose on the ship. The Old Man's jumpin' mad—not to mention them inspectors. Stop it, I say!"

Except for a slight widening of Mr. Elkin's grin, his mouth remained closed. He reached over and tapped the auxiliary expertly with a spanner. The pump accelerated another couple of revolutions.

Mr. Hallet's face whitened. This was not only madness, it was mutiny. He shoved Mr. Elkins aside and grabbed for the shut-off valve on the pump.

Mr. Elkins' smile faded. He drew back a step and looped an inexpert but adequate right cross to Mr. Hallet's whiskers. The mate sat down, passed a bewildered hand across his jaw, then sank tiredly back to the floorplates.

He lay still.

Mr. Elkins sighed and reached for the oil can. The erratic stamping of the auxiliary indicated need of lubrication.

It was several minutes later before Mr. Hallet returned to consciousness. There was a vaguely familiar roaring in his ears. He forced his eyelids apart with a great effort of will. The rumblings, he saw then, came from Captain Adamson as the master of the *Ceranto* lowered his bulk down the engine room ladder. The captain's chins were quivering as he fought for some measure of control of his bubbling anger.

"Shut that damned thing off!" he managed to shout at last.

"Yes, sir," Mr. Elkins said. He stopped the pump.

"Now," Captain Adamson said with cold fury, "before you pack your bags, maybe you'll explain—if you can. Commander Benton has condemned every hose on the vessel. You've probably burst the lines in a dozen places. You—you—Lord, man, you've caused damage that'll cost us a minimum of several hundred dollars."

"Yes, sir," Mr. Elkins answered meekly, "but I've saved you thousands, and probably clearance for the vessel—and your license as well."

"Perhaps I'm stupid, Mr. Elkins," the captain said icily, "but—"

"Captain Adamson!"

The skipper cringed and looked aloft. The two inspectors stood on an upper grating. Water from Commander Benton's soaked uniform dripped down on them.

"Captain," Benton said stiffly, "when your fire equipment is put in a proper state of repair you are free to sail. Mr. Axelblad has checked your draft and load line, and found everything in order. I—ah—confess we suspected that you had sailed from Kaluna in unseaworthy trim. We have evidently been in error, so in accepting your apology for the unfortunate—ah, accident to my person, I offer you my own. Good day, sir."

"Whew!" Captain Adamson breathed dumbfoundedly, when the inspectors had gone.

"You see, sir," Mr. Elkins beamed.

"I'm afraid I don't," the captain admitted.

Mr. Hallet sat up. He caressed a lump on the side of his jaw, then wiped at accumulated moisture on his chin that appeared to be dripping down from the overhead.

There was a puzzled frown above his eyes as he ran his tongue along the stickiness on his hand.

"Sugar," he said groggily.

"Yes, sir," Mr. Elkins agreed enthusiastically. He turned to Captain Adamson. "You see, sir," he went on earnestly, "the weakest spot in the fire line was in the shelter deck. That patchwork job I did there. It let go when I started the pump. I realized it when syrup began dripping through the seams of the overhead. Then I got to thinking about the trouble you were in. I'd heard you and Mr. Hallet talking, you see. So—so I just boosted the pressure to really blow out the line. It flooded the compartment. The sugar dissolved and ran into the bilges. I pumped it over the side. It's all very simple, sir. I venture to say that all you'll find in the shelter deck will be empty sacks."

After a long time Captain Adamson grunted, but not unkindly. "Ah, yes, Mr. Elkins." The skipper's voice was still grim. "But just who is going to pay for the sugar?"

"Why, the insurance will take care of that, sir. It's a pure case of mechanical failure of equipment. Everything else was in order. Commander Benton and Mr. Axelblad can bear witness to that. And the evidence of overloading is destroyed, or rather dissolved, sir."

"Yes," Captain Adamson said thoughtfully, "so it is." He turned toward the ladder, then stopped. He coughed. "Er—never mind packing up, Mr. Elkins. You'd better figure on staying aboard. And—er—Mr. Elkins—"

"Yes, sir?"

"That schoolship motto of yours. I was thinking—ah—it wouldn't be a bad idea to have something like that gracing the saloon of the *Ceranto*. Something in bronze, say. You're acquainted with metal working?"

"Not exactly, sir, but . . ."

Mr. Hallet arose unsteadily to his feet. He cleared his throat. ". . . But *Semper Docte*, eh, Mr. Elkins?"

The third assistant grinned. "*Semper Docte*, sir," he agreed.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

Everybody in America knew Matt Murphy and his famous broadcast "From Here On Out." But I knew them better than anybody. That's why it wasn't just the rain that made my cheeks wet as I stood beside that impersonal square of red clay in the Gullaly Cemetery in Addis Ababa and said goodbye to Matt for the last time. But it wasn't Matt I was feeling sorry for. He'd be making friends—From Here On Out, like the name of his broadcast—even beyond the grave. The person I was sorry for was Malcolm Murphy. His brother. Me. For I knew there was something wrong about the way Matt died and if it took the rest of my life I had to find out. And I didn't know where to start or how—or where it would end.

"THE DEVIL'S LEFT TUSK"

By ROBINSON MacLEAN

—points the way next month and gets Murphy started on as devious a danger road as any ever traveled through the Ethiopian barrenlands. Friendless, penniless, alone in a godforsaken land, unfamiliar with the language or the crazy customs of the country his task looked hopeless and so it was—until Ato Gubru David stepped into the picture and explained it was all a matter of *nafs*—or bloodshed in plain American. And that made it just about impossible—for who could have wanted to murder Matt—the friendliest guy who ever roamed the world? A great new novel in four parts by a man who knows his Africa as you know your own back yard!

Plus "Log Rafts South!"—a smashing novelette of the sea-going lumber giants of the Pacific Coast by Steve Hall. . . . "A Claymore for the Clan"—an exciting tale of Scotland in the bonny days when tartaned warriors leaped to defend the honor of their lairds when the pipes began to skirl their battle song by Donald Barr Chidsey. . . . Short stories of Tibet, the South Seas, Old Hickory's famous fighting cocks by Hal G. Evarts, Leslie Gordon Barnard, Everett M. Webber. . . . A fine article about the Australian camel patrol by Albert Richard Wetjen. . . . The stirring wind-up of Dee Linford's novel, "The Saint in the Saddle". . . . And an overbulging cargo of informative features, departments and verse. All in the next great—

ON SALE JUNE 9th

(Continued from page 8)

Sweetwater the nights began to be severe, and having insufficient bedding, the old and infirm began to droop and soon deaths became frequent . . . With the first snow storm, the last ration of flour was issued, and a march of sixteen miles lay before us, to the nearest camping ground on the Sweetwater . . . We finally reached that camp, where some five died the first night; fifteen died the second, among whom was my father, John Linford. Fifteen were put in one grave. While father was sick and just before he died of starvation, Levi Savage emptied his flour sack to make him some skilly, as it was called. After eating this, he died. After waiting several days in a starving condition, for help from Utah, a train arrived with what supplies it could bring . . ."

On the subject of polygamy, also, I was able to draw from family annals. My maternal great-grandfather, a man by name of Hess, had six wives. My grandfather, Jacob Hess, was the eldest of sixty-five children. He and his younger brother both looked with favor on the 15-year-old girl who became my grandmother. They dallied, trying to decide the issue peaceably between them. The patriarch, impatient of such tactics, called them together and warned them that if they did not make up their minds and one of them act, he would wed the lass himself. They decided to settle it by running a footrace. My grandfather cheated to win—and won the girl. "Honesty is the best policy," he always advised his children!

R. D. HAMILTON, who gives us "Ooyoo and the Chuckchis" on page 68 this issue, doesn't keep a pet walrus himself but substantiates the kernel of his yarn with the following—

There are actual cases on record (though without details) of Alaskans keeping pet walrus. How long such associations have lasted is a matter about which I know nothing, but as walrus are nothing but specialized seals, and as sea-lions are such intelligent and affectionate animals as pets of stage and circus people, I see no reason why the walrus should not behave similarly in similar circumstances. I have therefore modified slightly such things as are known about sea-lion and seal behavior to fit the case in the story.

With regard to the biology of the walrus which is worked into the story, it is all quite reliable and up to date, and is an off-shoot of research done in Alaska, and in the literature, and has been written up by me as a semi-popular article entitled *Whale Horse of the Icy Seas,* which appeared in the December *Fauna,* magazine of the Philadelphia Zoological Gardens.

The anthropology and archeology is also factual, to the best of my knowledge. My good friend Major Otto Geist (ATG), of Fairbanks and Nome has done most of the important work in digging out the history of the pre-Eskimo cultures of the Siberian land-bridge region, under the sponsorship of the University of Alaska and Department of the Interior. His report in collaboration, Geist and Rainey, Archeological Excavations at Kukulik, St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, published by the University of Alaska in 1936, is a classic. Major Geist is also, by the way, the source from which much that pertains to the character Jack Grant, in the story, is drawn.

As for the Siberian business, most of the scenes described are actual, and have been seen by me, excepting the final running fight, of course. Anything said or hinted about the Russians was common talk in Nome and other parts of Northwest Alaska a year ago.

You may be interested to know I have just received an Arctic Institute of North America grant to go back to Alaska and study the northern frogs, and I am frantically trying to get equipment together in order to be in Alaska in early April, a procedure complicated by equally frantic cramming for my doctoral prelims here at the University of Michigan which I must take before I go.

ANOTHER addition to our roster of *Ask Adventure* experts this month. Roland Wild joins our staff to answer queries on Afghanistan, Kashmir, Northern India and the Khyber Pass country. A friend of King Amanullah of Afghanistan, Mr. Wild covered for the press the monarch's London trip, his return to his own country and the subsequent revolution there. Long a resident of Northern India, Mr. Wild currently commutes between London and Los Angeles as special correspondent for Odham's Press, London. He is the author of the official biography of Ranjitsinhji, maharaja of Nawanagar and of a book about Amanullah among others. Mr. Wild claims his name has no bearing on the fact that he lives at the Savage Club in London but it makes an impressive address just the same!

JUST as we go to press comes the sad news from San Francisco that Albert Richard Wetjen is dead. Dick passed to Fiddler's Green March 9th and we shall all miss him sorely. Next month we will publish the last contribution we received from him—the last thing he ever wrote, we believe, for it had been mailed only a couple of days before he died and had not yet arrived when we heard the news of Dick's death.—K.S.W.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

THUNDER over the desert.

Query:—Can you tell me if thunder storms occur in Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunis and Algeria? If they do, please tell me with what frequency.

—Oscar Axley
R 2—Box 139,
Dongola, Ill.

Reply by H. W. Eades:—In the desert portions of this great territory, that is, away from the coastal areas and south of the Atlas, thunder either does not occur at all, or rarely. That is, not more than during three or four days in a year. Along the Mediterranean coast (also in portions of the interior desert country) thunder occurs with somewhat greater frequency. That is, it is heard during the year on 1 to 3 per cent of the total days. On the northwest Moroccan coast thunder is practically unknown. I can remember seeing torrential thunderstorms in the Nile delta.

Central Africa is one of the most thundery localities of the world, with a frequency of 30 per cent of the days in the year. Java with 60 per cent is probably the most thundery region on earth. In tropical and subtropical latitudes within the high pressure belt there are several localities where thunder is very rare, although except for the deserts of the Sahara and Arabia, the areas are almost entirely over the sea and the neighboring western coasts of the continents. The thunder-free coasts in these latitudes are northern California, Chile, north-west Africa and south-west Africa, precisely the localities where sea fog is common. Since fog is produced by surface cooling and thunderstorms by surface heating, this fact is not surprising. The region with less than 1 per cent of days with thunder (4 days per year) includes the whole of the polar regions, where, indeed, thunder is almost or entirely unkown.

MASTIGOPROCTUS *giganteus* or grampus.

Query:—Can you give me any information about the grampus or grampas, a local insect reportedly deadly poisonous? It resembles a scorpion except for the tail which looks like a darning needle. Does it bite or sting?

I have one preserved in formaldehyde and one which I have kept alive for about a week now. The latter eats other insects.

—J. L. Mart
R. R. #3 Box 854
Miami, Florida.

Reply by S. W. Frost:—The name grampus truly relates to a dolphin. However, the name has come to designate any ferocious-looking creature and thus has been applied to several insects and their relatives, especially to one of the false scorpions.

The animal to which you refer is the giant whip scorpion *(Mastigoproctus giganteus)* which is common in Florida, Texas and some other parts of the South. In Florida it is locally known as the "grampus" or "Mule killer." It has the general appearance of the true or poisonous scorpion but does not possess a sting at the end of its tail. Instead it has a long slender whip-like lash at the end of the body. The grampus is not poisonous. It is predacious and as you have discovered, feeds upon insects and other small animals.

SCHOLASTIC groundwork for a forester.

Query:—I am a boy fifteen years old in my last year of Junior High school. Can you give me any advice on which subjects to take in High School to help me prepare to be a forest ranger?

—Robert White
c/o *Adventure*

Reply by Arthur H. Carhart:—When I was in my first two years of college, I was very griped about a policy of the authorities that students must take subjects that were not directly related to forestry and horticulture. I wanted to be an "expert" right away. But since then I've been most grateful that they insisted on students having a couple of years in which to get a broad foundation in many fields.

I'd think that would go even more emphatically from Junior High on. Rangers have to meet and deal with many people that have various vocations and talk their language. They have to make public appear-

ances, for instance, and give talks. They have to have a background of some knowledge of economics. There is quite a bit of accounting of sorts. They have problems of insect control. They even have to know how to cook!

All that is merely to indicate the value of a wide, general education in that field with the many, many responsibilities and tasks a ranger meets.

Getting down to brass tacks, get all the biology you can; take the botany courses. Get a foundation of chemistry, for you'll benefit later as this leads into the study of soils, of nutrition and the like. Public speaking and practice in appearing before groups and giving a talk without being uneasy will help. And don't miss going after good training in English because one of the things I've found among foresters is a lack of facility in expressing themselves in writing. I've had quite a number of Colorado A&M boys in my staff at times, and came to the conclusion that the school took it for granted that they could write ably. Fact is, they couldn't in most cases. So lay all the ground work you can to be able to write clear, well constructed reports and letters; and there are times you might wish to write for local papers in telling the forest story.

But basically, get just as broad an educacational foundation as there is available. You'll have plenty of time to specialize in the specifically technical subjects of forestry when you get to college. The fellow who specializes from the very first jump gets narrowed down inside a limited field and it's the other fellow, the one with the broad knowledge and outlook, who then steps ahead into the higher, better administrative positions.

ELVERS for pike.

Query:—Have you ever heard of small eels being used for pike bait? Here in Vermont the pike fishing is pretty good but I have always used minnows for bait. I am told that eels work well and that the best size is four to six inches long. Can you tell me where I can buy or find such eels?

—Carl J. Reuschel
62 N. Champlain St.,
Burlington, Vt.

Reply by John Alden Knight:—Small eels are excellent bait for almost any sort of game fish if you can find them. The usual bait of this sort is the baby lamprey eel which is the only one of the eels, so far as I know, which breeds in fresh water. These eels spawn in late May and June, depending on water temperatures, and the young eels, as soon as they hatch out, bury themselves in the mud of the backwaters and the banks along our fresh-water streams. To obtain them it is necessary to do some heavy-duty shoveling and they are available in sizes which range from three to six or seven inches throughout July and August. Some of the companies which sell live bait also have young lamprey eels for sale.

The other eels are supposed to spawn somewhere in salt water, the exact location of their spawning beds being as yet undetermined. In the spring of the year, usually in May, these baby eels, or elvers, stage a concentrated, determined migration up the fresh-water streams along the Atlantic Coast. They migrate at night, staying close to the shoreline and usually they migrate in a body. Where waterfalls or dams occur, these little fellows will take the overland route and climb around such obstructions. Sometimes it is possible to find them hidden under the moss and grass among the rocks that fringe a major obstruction in a stream. The easiest way to capture these elvers is to use a flashlight and a minnow net with a fine mesh and go after them after dark during the migrating season.

MUZZLE blast.

Query:—I wish to have a .30-'06 barrel cut down to 22″ but have read that 22″ is undesirable because of the very unpleasant increase in muzzle blast. How true is that in your opinion? How much difference would there be between 22″, 24″ and 26″.

—Geo. D. Robinson, D.C.
401 A Reed St.,
Red Oak, Iowa

Reply by Donegan Wiggins:—I have done a certain amount of target shooting with a Model 1906 Springfield having a 22″ barrel, and while I admit it had more muzzle-blast than the 24″ standard barrel, I noted I shot it just as effectively. Noise does not seem to influence my own shooting, as far as I can determine.

Of course, it's a matter of personal preference, but I like the balance of the shorter-barreled rifles.

TO spur a boot.

Query:—Can you give me some information on how cowboys—past and present—wear their spurs? Should they be buckled on the inside or the outside?

—Mrs. Chet Butler
Pine Village, Ind.

Reply by Fred W. Egelston:—Spurs (plain) are usually buckled on the outside of the instep. Those with hand-carved leather trimmings are buckled on the inside, to show off the fancy work. Of course, it is largely a matter of personal preference, and "bronc" spurs buckle on top of the instep. Above is the common practice in Nevada.

TERRITORIAL Fourth Estate.

Query:—Will you please send me the names and addres s of several of the leading Alaskan Newspapers.

—W. J. Sams
New Smyrna Beach, Fla.

Reply by Frank Richardson Pierce:—Ketchikan Chronicle, Ketchikan, Alaska. Alaska Daily Empire, Juneau, Alaska. Anchorage Times, Anchorage, Alaska. Fairbanks News-Miner, Fairbanks, Alaska. Nome Nugget, Nome, Alaska.

SINEWS to back a bow.

Query:—(1) What animal has the Achilles heel tendons or sinews used in backing bows?

(2) Are these sinews used "raw" or prepared some way?

(3) Where can these sinews be procured?

(4) Would these sinews placed properly on the back of a reflexed lemonwood bow allow me to build the bow to a 65 or 70 lb. pull? I intend to build the sinews to about ¼" on the back.

—Robert G. Clayton
5345 Colerain Ave.
Cincinnati, Ohio

Reply by Earl B. Powell:—(1) Tendons for backing bows may be gotten from the Achilles tendons of beeves. Also the long tendons along the back of the animals—*ligamentum nuchae*—are used.

(2) They are usually dried till they are needed and then teased apart into fine filaments, soaked, and laid on in glue.

(3) Write to *The American Bowman-Review*, Albany, Oregon. They may be able to give you the address of a tackle maker handling them. Maybe you can make a deal with some local slaughterhouse for some of these.

(4) Yes. In fact sinew is the ONLY material used in bow backing that actually adds to the power and speed of a bow. All others slow it down. ¼ of an inch is pretty thick. About ⅛ to 3/16 is usually the best.

TREES to trim for Christmas.

Query:—I have only a short time to do in the Army before being retired and I am interested in raising evergreen trees of the type or variety used as Christmas trees, for commercial purposes.

I would be able to obtain as much acreage as would be practicable to look after, in Southern Utah.

This part of the state is semi-arid but early spring is rather wet and there is quite a bit of snowfall in the winter for moisture.

The altitude is around 6000 and the hills are in most sections heavily overgrown with juniper and jack pine trees, and timber of the larger variety in the higher altitudes.

Do you think it would be advisable to try and grow the variety of trees mentioned above? If so what variety would be best and how do I obtain the seeds or seedlings and where?

At what time of year will best results be obtained for planting?

—1/Sgt. Charles H. Renneau
Hq. Det. #3 QM Sch. Bn.
Camp Lee, Virginia

Reply by Arthur H. Carhart:—The raising of evergreens for Christmas trees doesn't work out very well in actual practice. Here's why.

Raising trees in planted rows requires either seed bed production of seedlings or the purchase of such seedlings. That's cost. Then cultivation, your overhead on land investment, and all the other items involved up to the time you cut the trees for Christmas trade.

In competition with any such tree-growing operation, is the wild tree. These have seeded themselves, taken care of their own growing, and cost outlay really begins when the tree is cut. There are two trees most generally used for Christmas trees; the hemlock in the east, the Douglas fir in the west. Instead of cutting small trees, that are well formed from tip to bottom, the best forestry technique now is to go into stands where the trees have grown up too thick for any one of them to mature into poles or sawlogs. Then thin, to give those trees left a chance to have more light, moisture and other growing needs. The thinned trees may be twenty or so feet high, even more, but at the top, usually, there is a stretch of good twigs and foliage, and this is lopped off, giving the effect of a well-formed little tree. You can see that any chance for cultivated trees in a "tree farm" row competing with these tops of trees that can be and are used for Christmas trees, just doesn't line up to give the tree-grower a chance at profit.

You speak of opportunities to get land in southern Utah. That is swell country; I know it. But the tree varieties there are slow growers unless you have high grade irrigated land on which to grow them. The point in that is, that if you have slow growing corps, you can't turn use of your land fast enough to come out.

I have several suggestions for you to follow and see what you may work out in this general field.

In the first place, if you want to grow trees, the money in evergreens lies in strictly nursery production. This would mean no great acreage of fairly fertile, irrigated land in the area you mention to get trees up to two or three feet in height for landscape use. Incidentally, they are now selling at something like $2 per running foot for well shaped little cedars, spruces and the like. You can either start with planting the seed, producing your own seedlings, possibly selling surpluses to nurseries, or you may buy

seedlings from commercial nurseries for a few cents each. I know a retired forester who, on a matter of about three acres, put his two boys through college by growing just the one species of juniper, commonly known as the "western red cedar." He grew these for nursery, specimine trees that brought good prices.

If you want to *grow* trees from little fellows, then, the way is open but you have to grow a product that will bring a lot more than if the trees are cut for Christmas tree use.

The other opening is to go into the business of supplying the trees that are secured from the thinning process I've described. In Denver, as an example, operators get permits from the U.S. Forest Service to thin certain areas of Douglas fir, under supervision. They start cutting in November or earlier, depending on season, stack the lopped tops that are the Christmas trees beside the road, truck them into the city, and wholesale them to operators of Christmas tree lots or set up a lot of their own. These trees are tagged to show they were taken under good forestry practice, and there is a selling license required. Limbs that are trimmed to shape up the tops into good Christmas trees are made into wreaths and grave blankets. There also is an opening for carload shipments to plains areas. If you could locate such a chance for operation in southern Utah, of which you write, you might find a bulk market in west coast cities, although you also might meet competition of similar operations in California and Oregon.

Either of these two lines of approach may lead to a sound enterprise, but in either case, by all means size up your outlet for the thing you're going to market. If it's specimine nursery trees for landscape plantings, your Utah location might be too remote to compete successfully in larger market centers with some similar outfit closer to that market.

I just can't hold out any good prospect for success in *growing* Christmas trees in the West, although if one could get a piece of cut-over land in the East, near markets, where there is a stand of young stuff that could be thinned annually it might work.

COUNTERFEIT gobble.

Query:—Could you tell me where to buy or how to make a turkey caller, made from a wing bone?

I have a couple of sets of wing bones, but, never having seen a caller, I don't even know which bone to use, or how the thing is made.

Have used several types of the box and slate caller, but they don't seem to work so well on these South Texas turkeys.

—C. J. Floyd
500½ E. 4th St.
Alice, Texas

Reply by Paul M. Fink:—I've never seen a wingbone turkey call, though my mother tells me that my grandfather, in ante-Civil War days in Virginia, used them with great success. But I have seen a hunter use an ordinary cane pipestem and produce a turkey yelp that to my ear sounded like the real thing. Whether or not it would have fooled a real turkey is something else again.

Cupping his hands over one end, he sucked at the other, opening and closing his hands to vary the tone and volume of the call. I'm assuming that a wingbone call would be made by cutting off both ends of the bone, removing the marrow and cleaning out thoroughly, and then using the resulting tube just like the pipestem.

The success of this, like a crow call, duck call or any other animal call, lies not only in reproducing the tone, but sounding it in the same manner the animal "talks." For example, a turkey will not continue yelping continually, but will call a time or two, with an interval before it sounds off again. Too frequent calling, wrong sequence of calls, all these warn the game that something is wrong, and the hunter never sees that for which he is looking. That could conceivably be the trouble with your box or slate calls.

TO TAN a snake skin.

Query:—I have been trying to find some successful method for tanning snake skins. I would be indebted to you if you could tell me how to do this.

—A. LeRay
220A Allen St.
Ben Morrell
Norfolk, Va.

Reply by Clifford H. Pope:—Tanning snake skins is a difficult and disappointing project. However the following information maybe useful to you: The defleshed, softened skin is soaked in a solution of 3 oz. slaked lime to 1 gallon water till scales are loose and may be brushed off with a stiff brush. After soaking in warm water with a little boric acid to thoroughly remove the lime, place the skin in a weak solution of alum and salt (15 grams chrome-alum, 3 oz. salt, 1 gal. water) and after 4 days add a glass of 5 grams of sodium carbonate dissolved in warm water to the alum and salt solution, slowly, by drops, and leave the skin for another six days, stirring daily. Then soak the drained skin in one part sulphonated oil to three parts water briefly. Stretched by tacks to a board the skin should dry thoroughly and then be worked till pliable, finally using a warm iron. To give the skin a new, glossy look a very thin coat of liquid celluloid may be applied to the top, or pattern, side.

For very small skins you can, of course, work out varying adaptations of the procedures and formulas here given.

THE pesky, pesty hornet.

Query:—One of the men of this community came to me with a problem I cannot solve. A double lilac in his yard is being attacked by wasps. They bore holes into the trunks as well as eat the buds. DDT has been tried unsuccessfully.

Can you tell us how to prevent the destruction of the bush?

—Jay P. Hagenbach
Supervisor Voc. Agr.
Slatington, Penna.

Reply by S. W. Frost:—The European hornet, which is involved in your inquiry, is at times somewhat difficult to control. Only occasionally does this insect cause damage but apparently you have run across one of these cases. A short discussion of the habits of this species will help in making suggestions for control measures.

The European hornet usually builds its nest in hollow trees or in openings beneath boards on the sides of dwellings. The nest is constructed of paper which is made from decayed wood or occasionally of bark fiber. Large colonies may number 10 to 15,000 individuals which accounts for the extent of the damage under some circumstances. Since these hornets do not use the bark as food, it is impossible to poison them with D.D.T. or other poisonous materials.

There is one consolation, as far as this season is concerned, the colony dies off in the fall with the exception of a few females or queens which winter over and start new colonies in the spring. With the approach of the first real cold weather the hornets will cease their work and injury. It is very likely, however, that a new colony will develop next year in the same locality.

For another year, the most satisfactory method of control is to locate the nest and destroy it. This can be found by watching the hornets as they leave the lilac and fly back to the nest. When the nest is small it can be easily destroyed especially if it is located in a tree. Carbon bisulphide can be used for this purpose.

Some protection can be had during the summer by wrapping the lilac branches especially the larger ones with paper or better with corrugated cardboard. The hornets usually appropriate these in place of the bark as it is more desirable material. Incidentally I have seen these hornets in the woods rasping paper from the surfaces of signs that have been placed there.

PAY rate in the R.C.M.P.

Query:—What does a Royal Canadian Mounted Police private get a month? And is he called a constable, a lance corporal, or a special constable?

—Leon Powell
Gen. Del.
Sterling, Ill.

Reply by H. S. M. Kemp:—There are no "privates" in the ranks of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the equivalent rank being designated as constables. The pay for constables is up to $2.75 per day. In addition, they receive board, uniform, medical attention, the benefits of a pension plan, and certain other pay allowances.

The rank of lance corporal has been abolished.

A special constable is a civilian sworn-in to act as a police officer. He is not bound by contract and may leave on a month's notice. Nor is he issued a uniform. Special constables may include certain office ranks, dog handlers, guides, etc.

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Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL E. THRUSH, New York, Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American, north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Entomology: *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

Forestry, North American: *The U. S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

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Royal Canadian Mounted Police—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

★New Guinea—L. P. B. ARMIT, c/o *Adventure.*

★New Zealand, Cook Island, Samoa—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★Australia and Tasmania—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, No. 1 Flat "Scarborough," 83 Sidney Rd., Manley, N. S. W., Australia.

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Eastern U. S. Part 1 *Maine*—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, P. O. Box 716, Woodmont, Conn. **3** *Adirondacks, New York*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif. **4** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C., S. C., Fla., Ga.*—HAPSBURG, LIEBE, c/o *Adventure.* **5** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and concerning women are declined as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.

I am anxious to discover the whereabouts of Melvin Beverley Knox, about 45 years old, 6 feet, complexion dark brown, possibly gray by now, brown eyes, weight 200 lbs. Last heard from in Kalispeel, Montana, though we heard that he worked on the Coolee Dam in Washington. He went to Regina to work on the railroad twenty-three years ago and drifted from there to Montana. Please contact Isaac E. Shirley, R.R. No. 3, Chipman, New Brunswick, Can.

I want to contact Bill Potter, cowpuncher and cartoonist. He was born in Philadelphia and lived at Verona while conducting a doll factory in Newark, New Jersey; worked with me on old "Forest & Stream," at the Essex School of Musketry and the Lake Junior Range, Chatham, N. J. Need more of his illustrations. Also members of the Corps Hudsonia in Hoboken, N. J., particularly Captain Lefevre and Carl Keller, who can provide historical data on American fencing. Write Roy S. Tinney, Recorder, Brielle, New Jersey.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of James Mandow, please write to S. E. Purington, 57 Exchange St., Portland 3, Maine. The last time I heard from him was in 1945. He was in the army stationed in Japan and before that he was living in New York.

Anybody who knows Raymond F. Miller, U.S. C.G., 13th or Juneau District, Nome, Alaska, Box 281 (his last known address), please contact R. V. Webster, 1020 Post St., San Francisco 9, Calif. Miller's hobby is photography and he had a friend in Galveston, Texas, by the name of Elton W. Yancy.

Please address C. B. Stroud, Coral Ridge, Ky., Rt. No. 1, if you know anything about the following: An American flyer landed near Hohen Kemnath, Germany, April 9, 1945, and was taken to the hospital in Kastl suffering with a bullet wound in leg and burns on hands, arms, and face. About April 20, '45, he was moved to the second floor of the hospital at Amberg. About four days later an American lt. col. arrived in a jeep and talked to the wounded man. Two days after that he was taken by ambulance to an

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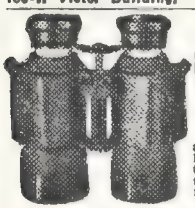

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American hospital. Dr. Wilhelm Schmidt was in charge of one of the German hospitals. Lt. John D. Stroud, my son, has not been heard of since that time.

I will greatly appreciate contacting any of the following named men who were members of Troop D, 3rd U. S. Cavalry, stationed at Fort Assiniboine, Montana, in the years 1903-1933—1st Lieut. Reginald McNally (Com.), Sgt. Carl G. Day, Sgt. Lawrence Creekhaven, Egbert Ward, Corp. Nicholas Nusbaum, Thurston Thickston (Hosp. Corps), Pvt. Clyde R. Hess, Sam Standley, Clyde H. Shelmester, Ben C. Parrar or any other member of the above outfit. I hope to obtain information needed by the V.A. from the above. Please write Charles M. W. Burden, Box 128, Eddyville, Ky.

I would like to contact anyone who served on the LST 1033 during the time she was first commissioned until V-J day. H. L. Martin, Box 66, Ashland, W. Va.

I want address or information of my son, William (Bill) Andrew Clow; born at Carmen, Okla., Oct. 16, 1920. He is slightly deaf. Last heard of March 14, 1938, at Bellefontaine, Ohio. Said he was on way to Boston. He lived at Cleo Springs, Okla., and El Centro, Calif., and towns in Arkansas. Please write Earl Clow, P.O. Box 684, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Will someone who was in Jap prison in Java from 1942 to 1944 who, perhaps, knew Seaman Moody C. Harrison, please write me. He was presumed to be lost when the Japs were moving him from Java in 1944. The ship was sunk by allies. C. L. Kitchens, 12 Maurice Ave., Simonsdale, Portsmouth, Va.

I would like to locate my father, Dewey Chaves Shiver, born March 28, 1901, at Lincoln, New Mexico. Has not been heard from since August, 1930. He has lived in San Francisco, El Paso, and Florida. In El Paso, he lived on Cotton, Erie, and Copper streets. He was in the Navy in 1917-1921, enlisting at Roswell, New Mexico. Please get in touch with Bill Shiver, Box 818, Oklahoma City, Okla.

P. J. Ferriere, Box 163, Commack, N. Y., wants to hear from any surviving crew members of the U.S.S. *West Over,* Army Cargo and Supply ship, which was torpedoed and sunk in the Bay of Biscay on or about July 21st, 1918.

I am anxious to contact my uncle, John Dunlop, native of Sydney Mines, Nova Scotia. He is of medium height, gray hair, and in his middle fifties, probably a salesman or an accountant. He was last seen in Boston, Mass., in 1926. Charles Dunlop, 63 Pleasant St., Truro, Nova Scotia.

I would like to contact my buddy, Herbert C. Summers. We soldiered together with Co. C., 393rd Inf., 99 Div. I last saw him during the Battle of the Bulge, Dec. 16, 1944. His home is somewhere in Charleston, W. Virginia. Anyone knowing him please contact George O. Parker, 250 Columbia St., Cumberland, Md.

I am very interested in locating the following buddies of mine. We served in the 26th Regt., First Inf. Div., both in the states and the ETO; in England, Scotland, North Africa, and Sicily, where we were separated. S/Sgt. John Page, about 5′ 7¼ 140 lbs., ruddy complexion, reddish brown wavy hair, square features, and about 33 years of age. Page is formerly of Jersey City, N. J. Sgt. George (Big George) Brighindi, 6′ 1″, 200 lbs., olive complexion, black wavy hair, plays guitar. He is from Bridgeport, Conn., about 29. T/Sgt. Arthur (Lippy) Lippman, dark complexion, black thinning wavy hair, about 5′ 6″, slender build, from New York City, is about 32 years old. Any information will be appreciated by Danny Monahan, 354 Water St., Leominster, Mass.

I would like to inquire about William Breese, Paul Dees, and Jakie Marlow with whom I served in the 12th Photo Section, France Field, Canal Zone. Please contact James C. Long, San. Eng., N. J. State Hospital, Greystone Park, N. J.

Roscoe Pinney, who served in the First World War with the 81st Toronto Battalion, wounded, gassed and shell-shocked, discharged June 1919 at Toronto. Last seen in Sheridan, Wyoming, in 1920. Supposed to have been in Youngstown, Ohio, in 1933. Anyone knowing his whereabouts please write his father, Guy C. Pinney, Sr., 490 Morningside St., North Long Beach, Calif.

Francis Charles Aitkens, R.C.A.F., would like news of John Dowrie (Mick) Roberts. He was born in Dublin about 1891, went overseas with the Canadian Artillery from Victoria October, 1915, and returned in 1921. He worked in Clinton, B.C., then was a storekeeper in Victoria. In 1926 he went to California where he worked at Petaluma. The last address was Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, in 1938. Please communicate with Sqdn. Ldr. F. C. Aitkens, Box L-160, R.M.D. 4, Victoria, B.C., Canada.

I am trying to locate my buddy, Norman Proper. He was on the *S. S. Minotaur, S. S. Matonian,* and the *S. S. Esso Baytown.* His home town is Denver, Colo., and he is 6′ 2″ tall, weighing about 165 lbs. He has brown hair. He was last heard of in Port Aransas, Texas. William Quinn, 3314 Waterloo Place, Dallas, Texas.

W. H. McCarty, 965 Clinton St., Napa, Calif., wants information of his two brothers, A. W. McCarty, whose nickname is "Buck," and W. F. McCarty, sometimes called "Bill."

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Arthur Micue or Matthews, please write N. F. Preo, 3000 S. Lawndale Ave., Chicago 23, Ill. He enlisted from Maine in the U. S. Army, served in Texas and Mexico with the cavalry against Villa about 1917-1918.

I would appreciate any help in finding George Van Denworker. He would be about 80 years old now. He raised my wife's father, George A. Van Denworker, along with three other boys, one of whom was his own. The family last heard from him in 1935 when he was in San Francisco. Please contact Laurence C. Buck, 317½ N. Maine St., Ellensburg, Washington.

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Information wanted about Lt. Gene Manghi, O-1641540, 56th Signal Battalion, who wrote me from Czechoslovakia regarding my article on hybrid oak crop trees published in *Popular Science*, April, 1945. Any knowledge of him should be forwarded to Thomas Q. Mitchell, 1564 Broadway, New York, N. Y., c/o BILLBOARD.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of my son, Hercules McClain, veteran of World War I, last heard of at 519½ South Daley St., Los Angeles, Calif., engaged in landscape gardening at that time, 1932, please write to his brother, William D. Meeks, Apt. 1, 102 Palmetto Dr., Pasadena 4, Calif.

I want to contact Stephen Kolowski from Chicago who was on the Secretary of Navy's yacht and the Receiving Station in Washington. Also Joe Vieditch who was on the old Reuben James 245 in 1920—and William Jennings Bryan Guest from St. Louis who was on the old battleship, the New Jersey. Would also like to find William Wischehtch from the Naval Magazine in Coco Solo and Naval Air Station along with William Henry Hanna Hurst from New Orleans who was on the old Flusser 289 in 1920. Please write L. W. Fraser, CGM, USN, 16th Fleet Staff, Orange, Tex.

I would appreciate any information about Frank and Fred Reed of New Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The last known of Frank, he was still in Pennsylvania and Fred was somewhere on the West Coast. Anyone knowing of either Frank's or Fred's whereabouts, please write to M. M. Mausser, R.F.D. No. 1, Bernard, Iowa.

I should like to locate Vernie Baldwin, 35 years old, lived in Live Oak and Jacksonville, Fla., in 1928 and early in the 30's. He is related to John Sterling and is the son of B. O. Baldwin. Please write J. E. Cross, P.O. Box 61, Live Oak, Fla.

I am very anxious to contact my old buddy, former S/Sgt. Harry Rogers. We served with the 491st Bomb. Group H. He may be in Biloxi, Miss., or Mobile, Ala. I have been trying since October, 1945, to find him and any help you may be able to give me will be appreciated. Please write to George Paraspolo, 627 29th St., San Francisco, Calif.

Will any soldier serving in Company A, 275th Engineers Bn., 75th Division, in Holland during the first part of 1944 who knew Cpl. F/5 Thomas L. Graham or Quentin Rall please write to Mrs. J. E. Graham, Artesia, New Mexico.

I would like to locate Ed La Vergue who was on the *USS Marblehead* at the time of her historic encounter with the Japanese. Please write J. O. Jernigan, 1014 W. Eastland Ave., Nashville, Tenn.

Can anyone help me find my brother-in-law, Anthony Ofsian? I last heard from him in 1943 when he sailed with the Merchant Marine. He usually sailed the Robin Lines as a cook or chief steward. His mother is very sick and is asking for him. Anyone having any information regarding Tony, please communicate with Joseph J. Machovic, 833 Abbott Court, Baltimore 2, Md.

(Continued from page 67)

Burke plucked at my sleeve. "Let's go down!" he said. "It's about over. That's where they'll make their last stand!"

"If it's nearly over—"

"That's where to look for Caron! Come on!"

I should have reflected that it was not the success or failure of the revolution Burke cared about. We went down, and from a window on the second floor we saw a white flag flutter out at the front of the warehouse.

Burke swore at the sight of it, while I blinked stupidly.

"What's happened?" I asked. "Has General Caron . . . ?"

"No, but all the others are saving their skins! Look!"

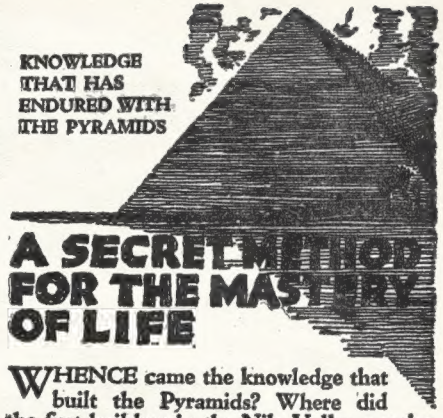
They filed out of the warehouse, with their hands in the air. The firing had stopped. But, in the silence, a shot rang out from an upstairs window of the building they had just left, and one of them screamed and pitched forward. I had not moved, but John Burke's fingers gripped my arm, hard.

"Wait!" he said.

That single shot brought a storm of fire by way of reply, and Burke was dragging me down the next flight of stairs. "They'll think it's a trick, a trap, and they won't rush the warehouse yet. We may be in time! Lord, I never thought it would be like this! We can take the skiff, and—"

HE made me wait in the skiff, at the jetty behind the warehouse. Himself, he sprang up the ladder-like steps and disappeared into the dark building. It came to me then with a sort of slow surprise that John Burke was about to solve that old problem of his. After twenty-five years, the wheel had come full circle; his enemy was delivered fairly into his hands! It didn't even occur to me that at this last moment Burke might still miss, that Diego Caron might have a bullet left for him. That would be the cheapest kind of irony! No, somewhere up above me, while the peremptory rifle-fire still went on at the landward side . . .

There were footsteps on the jetty, just level with my head. "It is here,"



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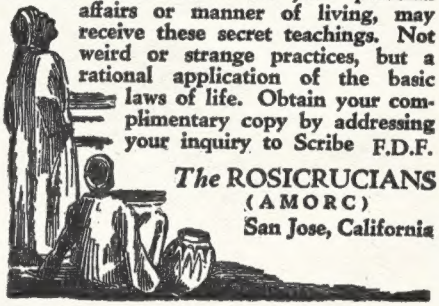

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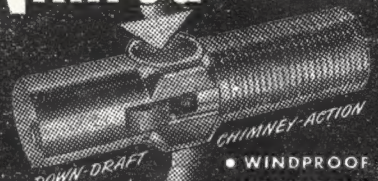

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said Burke softly, in Spanish. "Can you see?"

"How not? But where are you taking me?"

"To that American ship that lies out in the roadstead, the one that sails tomorrow. They will search every building for you, even my hotel, but they will not search that ship."

"Ah!" said Diego Caron. "I have money in New York, in a bank. Tell the captain of the ship that. And tell your name, that I may send money to reward you. You are a brave man, and great-hearted!"

"I don't want any reward."

"But why? The others, my enemies, would have rewarded you if you had handed me over to them!"

The skiff crept across the dark water. John Burke said, "Never mind that! I've got all the money I want. It wasn't for money that I helped you get away."

"Why was it then? Who has a better right to ask than I?"

"Be still, can't you?" Burke cried. "And keep your head down! Do you want the whole harbor to know that you are escaping?"

He sounded ill-tempered. And when we had hustled Diego Caron aboard that American vessel and turned back toward San Jaime ourselves, he sounded even more ill-tempered. "What else could I do?" he demanded, truculently. "What would *you* have done?"

I said, meekly, that I didn't know. I was reflecting that, in a way, John Burke had had the revenge he had waited for so long. When your enemy is completely in your power, to save or destroy, magnanimity must be nearly as good as vindictiveness. For my own part, I was happy that it had turned out this way. Happy on Burke's account, as well as my own. Burke deserved to be called what The Gamecock had called him—a brave man, and great-hearted. For a time, while I waited there alone by the dark jetty, I had feared that—

We were getting close to shore. John Burke said, in a tone of exasperation, "Well, anyway, it's all over and done with, and there's no use thinking about it any more! Lord, I couldn't just *leave* him there!"

THE END

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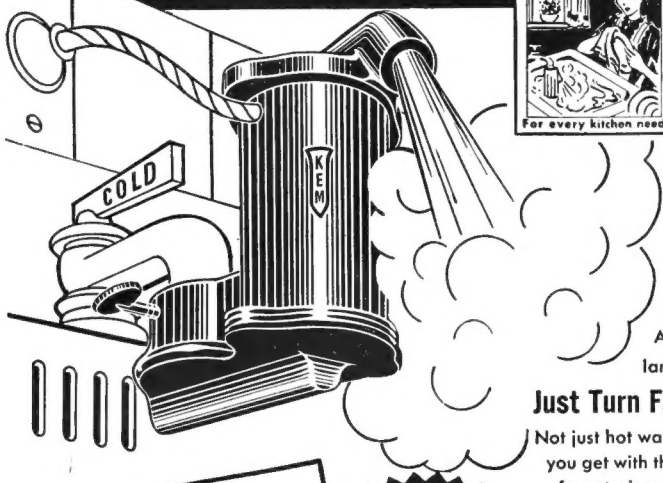

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